

## **IPMA Education and Training Series<sup>1</sup>**

### **A new paradigm in E&T: Result oriented Learner-Centred E&T approaches using APHs**

**By Chinwi Obari Mgbere**

*Asst. Professor, School of Engineering, Nazarbayev University, Astana Kazakhstan*  
Extended Member, IPMA Education and Training Board

As part of implementing the IPMA 2020 strategy, the IPMA Education and Training Board has embarked on a remarkable innovation project. The development of Annotated Project Handbooks (APHs) that will bridge theoretical knowledge and practical experience as described by Pantouvakis (2015) may prove a useful tool. This project has a chance of succeeding if efforts are made at all levels, namely at the curriculum, educator (trainer) and learner (student, project manager), embedding hands-on project management experience in the training curriculum.

Most training programmes are rarely based on practical experience. Learners ask for practical cases to kick-start their project management experience.

This paper addresses Learner-Centred E&T approaches using APHs developed to support and increase visibility and impact of E&T within current IPMA Member Associations and facilitate the sustainable development of new Member Associations through delivery of value based Education & Training.

This paper comes from a practitioner perspective and looks at learner-centred approaches to education and training. For successful implementation of this approach, we highlight three areas of innovation in E&T.

- Curriculum within the framework of an Annotated Project Handbook
- Professionalism of educators
- The Learner-centred learning

#### **Curriculum**

It is argued, that the world of Education and Training must make a fundamental shift, from an institution centred model to a mobile, flexible, technologically solid and more learner-centred model.

---

<sup>1</sup> This series of articles is by members of the IPMA Education and Training (E&T) Board or other IPMA leaders on the subject of project management education, training, careers and related topics. More information about the IPMA E&T can be found at <http://ipma.ch/education>.

Higher education sector as a whole appears to be somewhat averse to innovation. There is no real evidence of reorientation in the sector. Education providers are poorly equipped to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Yet, with more and more private sector education providers entering the market, the need for innovation is increasing. It is with this context that the IPMA E&T's vision is set out.

A curriculum is based on available resources, legislation and regulations, the need for and importance of employability, lifelong competence development and preparation for a role in society. The aspiration of students have become increasingly profession oriented.

A learner-centred training is a promising sound way of preparing learners for their future personal, professional and societal roles.

The competence levels described in ICB serve as a guideline for trainers when building curricula for developing project management competences in their students. This is achievable with the use of annotated project handbooks.

### **Professionalism of educators**

Trainers play a key role with respect to quality of Education and Training. Professionalization of trainers is an integral part of the E&T framework. The IPMA E&T provides Member Associations with frameworks like the IPMA Registration that deliver to teaching staff - a verification of excellent qualifications.

Buy-in by experienced trainers in this arrangement is vital guaranteeing a win-win situation with the provision by MAs of the necessary contracts, Quality Assurance, and Pricing model.

### **Learner-centred learning**

The Bologna Process, initiated by 29 Ministers responsible for education in Bologna in 1999, has brought with it unprecedented reform across Europe. It has necessitated a shift from more organizational input-oriented curricular design – classic teaching, based on the description of course content, to outcome-based higher education. This has resulted in a re-thinking of higher education course content in terms of learning outcomes; making students more aware of what knowledge, attitude, skill and experience they can expect to develop through their studies.

Student-centred learning (SCL), as the term suggests, is a method of learning or teaching that puts the learner at the centre (MacHemer et al, 2007; Boyer, 1990). With the application of an SCL approach in education, there is necessarily a shift in focus from academic teaching staff to the learner.

Learner-Centred Learning strategies and approaches are to increase the capacity of student and staff organisations to be active partners in the materialization of the paradigm shift. This paradigm shift call for the implementation of necessary tools, thus:

- Set of flexible and interactive Annotated Project Handbooks with practical case studies for student reflection on project situations for developing their knowledge, attitude, skill, and experience.
- Examination of the professional development and training that is required for academic staff. An example is the Train the Trainer programme with subsequent IPMA Registration

### **Adult as learners.**

Every adult has developed a self-concept. Generally, this includes the concept of being responsible for their own lives and their own decisions. They have beliefs about their own capabilities to achieve certain goals. These beliefs are what Bandura refers to as self-efficacy (Stipek, 1988). The consequences of high self-efficacy include a willingness to approach and persist on tasks, a focus on problem-solving strategies and reduced fear and anxiety. These all affect achievement outcomes.

It is imperative if learning is to be student-centred amongst adults that it does not become synonymous with classroom teaching. Research into training barriers note that many respondents felt that exciting, varied, interactive and interesting training delivery style is important in terms of engaging students' interest. Training is most effective when conducted on-the-job. There may be value in changing project situation, so that students do not become over-familiar with a particular setting and complacent, or so that they could learn new ideas.

Most curricula and teaching approach have a subject-centred orientation to learning. In contrast, Project managers are relevancy-oriented. They are task or problem centred. They must see a reason for learning something. Learning has to be applicable to their project situation or other responsibilities to be of value to them when addressing certain challenges in their projects. Therefore, educators must identify objectives for project participants before the course begins. The IPMA Competence Baseline provides a sound ground for developing such curricula with "Process Steps" and "Topics Addressed". This concept takes the participant through the project phases with situational use of different tools and techniques in line with the ICB competence elements and sub-elements. This fulfils participants' involvement in practical exercises that meet their own needs.

### **Annotated Project Handbook**

In helping students master project management the development of Annotated Project Handbook, despite coverage of the IPMA Competence Baseline elements, will incorporate the following concepts:

- **User friendly text** – visually appealing and pedagogically useful
- **Preview of learning objectives** in line with the ICB competence elements and sub-elements

- Reinforce **situational use** of competence elements throughout the phases of the project with focus on project-case use.
- **Visually** reinforce concepts of competence elements
- **Review** of learning objectives, concepts and terminology (glossary)
- Students **practice** and **development** of **knowledge**, appropriate **attitude**, **skill**, and **experience** within the competence elements
- Student **online study Centre** with resources and study aids

An area of profound challenge is the use of appropriate Information Technology platform. Project management is an area that lends itself well to practical hands-on tuition. Too much reliance still seems to be placed on “book learning” and lecture. In resolving this, APH will contain templates that allow students to work exercises, problems, and cases in the text using leading project, programme, and portfolio management software like Oracle Primavera and Microsoft Project.

## Conclusion

The field of adult learning is complex and requires as much from the educator in the management of the learning. This paper has attempted to outline how adults learn and has presented a simple model for educators. There are many other learning approaches and many different instructional models. One thing that is common across these is the centrality of the student in the process. Educators of adults must involve students in the learning process. They must accept the process as a partnership and appreciate that all adult learners come with a wealth of experience and deserve to be treated with respect.

Text book reading and lecture based teaching is becoming obsolete and is being replaced by practical problem solving and critical thinking involved activities reflected in Annotated Project Handbook (APHs).

## References

- Boyer, E.B. (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered. Priorities of the Professoriate*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, New York.
- Machemer, P.L., Crawford, P. (2007) ‘Student Perceptions of Active Learning in a Large Cross-Disciplinary Classroom’. In: *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 8:1, p.9.
- Pantouvakis, J.P. (2015) “Let practitioners speak” – An open invitation to the PM community for the development of Annotated Project Handbooks (APHs), *PM World Journal*, Vol. IV, Issue II
- Stipek, D. J. (1988). *Motivation to learn: From theory to practice*, (2nd edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

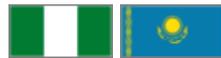
## About the Author



### **CHINWI OBARI MGBERE**

Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakshtan  
Extended Member, IPMA Education & Training Board

Astana, Kazakshtan & Abuja, Nigeria



**Chinwi Obari Mgbere**, Industrial & Civil Eng., M.Sc., PhD, Project & Programme management; with 15 years' experience in managing projects is charged with the implementation of the Nazarbayev University facility construction in Astana, Kazakhstan (7 project portfolios consisting of 27 projects, including MEGA projects). More than 10 years' experience in professional project management, implementing projects in several countries from Ukraine, to Vietnam and now Kazakhstan. He is National First Assessor in Nigeria for the IPMA 4-Level Certification, Head of the PMDAN Education and Training Board and implementor of corporate Project, Program & Portfolio Management Control Systems. E-mail: [cmgbere@nu.edu.kz](mailto:cmgbere@nu.edu.kz)