

# MOTIVATING ADULT LEARNERS USING BLENDED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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## ABSTRACT

The process of teaching and learning is one of the most common issues discussed by educators and students regardless of in primary, secondary or even in tertiary level of education. It is important for the educators to ensure that learners especially those in tertiary education are motivated in learning thus promoting life-long learning. In line with the MyBrain15's programme launched by the Government of Malaysia which targeted 60,000 PhD holders among Malaysian by the year 2023, it is important to ensure that the learners are motivated to learn. Therefore, ARCS Model of Motivational Design need to be implemented in the curriculum in order to motivate the students as well as promoting autonomy in learning. The integration of technology in curriculum will also help to provide a new dimension of learning experience for both the educators and learners. This paper proposes the integration of blended learning and ARCS model to be implemented in higher education institution to improve the quality of teaching and learning process. The focus of this paper is on knowing the adult learners, understanding the implementation of ARCS motivational model in teaching and learning process, understanding the precise definition of blended learning, the approaches in the implementation, the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning and finally the implication in the teaching and learning experience.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Adult Learners, ARCS Model of Motivational Design, Blended Learning, Improving teaching and learning.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Teaching and learning process supposes to offer both educators and learners with beneficial knowledge, enlightening experience and interactive interaction in classroom. According to Parkay, Anctil and Hass (2009), curriculum leaders must understand that appropriate instructional methods as well as meaningful curriculum are the important elements in order to establish an effective learning environment. It shows that, after the educator developed the curriculum, the educator must also consider on the instructional activities that cater to the needs of the learners. However, developing appropriate learning activity is not an easy task. As mentioned by Parkay, Anctil and Hass (2009), developing appropriate learning activities require the educator to be thoughtful, have insight into learners' motivation as well as having good judgment.

Teaching in tertiary level of education is definitely not the same as teaching in primary and secondary levels. In order to ensure that the teaching and learning process can achieve the objectives of the curriculum, educators need to aware of the capability and needs of the learners in terms of cognitive, affective and psychological aspects. As mentioned by Knowles, adults learned differently from children because an adult has arrived at a self-concept of being responsible for one's own life and being self-directed (cited in Smith, 2002). According to Jonassen (1999), learning process must be authentic; personally relevant, challenging and interesting to learners as well as provides a physical simulation of the real-world task environment. When all these aspects being considered, the learners will be motivated to learn. Motivation is the most important aspect that the educator needs to look into in order to gain effective teaching and learning process.

By having great amount of motivation in learning, the learners are able to pursue their education to the highest level as well as moving towards life-long learning. According to Asil, Norlia and Jamil (2011), life-long learning is a continuous process to improve one's knowledge, skills and competence based on the learning objectives of the subject matter. They also stated that the government is the main agent for promoting lifelong learning at the tertiary level. In Malaysia, our government had launched the MyBrain15 programme, which portrays on the government's effort to encourage Malaysians to continue their studies up to postgraduate level. This program is the critical agenda project under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan. The objective of this programme is to increase the number of highly knowledgeable human capitals for the purpose of enhancing research, development and innovation. The target of the programme is to achieve 60,000 PhD holders among Malaysians by the year of 2023.

Thus, it is important to motivate the learners to sustain their studies to the highest level. Learners' motivation can be nurtured through several methods and one of them is through the inculcation of instructional technology in classroom. This paper focuses on knowing the adult learners, understanding the implementation of ARCS motivational model in teaching and learning process, understanding the precise definition of blended learning, the approaches in the implementation, the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning and finally the implication in the teaching and learning experience.

## **KNOWING THE ADULT LEARNERS: CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS:**

The term 'andragogy' is developed by Malcom Knowles in 1830s, to explain on the process of teaching and learning for adults. Smith (2002) highlighted Malcom's five characteristics of adult learners that are different from child learners. Firstly, adult learners have their own self-concept in which they move from being dependent towards self-directed human being. Secondly, as an adult learner matures, he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning. Thirdly, as a person mature, his readiness to learn becomes increasingly oriented to the developmental tasks of his social roles. Next, adult also has a time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application according to learning orientation from subject-centeredness to problem-centeredness. Lastly, as a person matures, the motivation to learn is internal compared to child learner which is more towards extrinsic motivation.

### **CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS:**

According to Faizah and Hazadiah (2010), adults constantly live in an accelerated and multi-tasking mode and thus, prefer learning programs that cater to their hectic lifestyle. Hence, they stated that programmes learning modes offering, shorter semesters, part-time mode, lesser contact hours, flexible time tables, morning classes, and close to home venues are very much favoured by the adult. Tailoring adult learners' preferences to their needs does not only support their lifelong learning process but also please their employers.

Faizah and Hazadiah (2010) added that the internet has become the most preferred mode of instruction since studying can be accomplished at the workplace and home. Some adult learners are receptive to hybrid programmes where accelerated programmes and distance learning merge in an eclectic mode. Eclectic programmes tend to cater to more different individual needs (Tracey, 2004). Hence offerings of adult education must recognize the necessity to accommodate to adult learners needs.

### **ARCS MODEL OF MOTIVATIONAL DESIGN:**

The ARCS model of motivational design was created by John Keller in the mission of finding possible ways to supplement the learning process with motivation (Poulsen et.al, 2008). According to Keller (1983), this model is able to stimulate and sustain learners' motivation to learn. The model consists of four main areas which develop the acronym which are Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction.

According to the theory, attention refers to the interest displayed by the learners in taking in the concepts or ideas being taught (Poulsen et.al, 2008). Educators need to aware that grabbing learners' attention is important because attention helps to instigate motivation. For example, if the educators managed to get learners attention and they are interested in the topic, they will be motivated to continue the lesson and eager to find discover more information regarding the topic. Attention can be gained in two ways which are the perceptual arousal and inquiry arousal. When using perceptual arousal in order to gain attention from the learners, the educators can use specific and relevant examples to the learners, stimulates learners' interest by providing the opposite point of view in which might create conflict to the learners or using a little amount of humor in class in order to lighten up the subject. Perceptual arousal helps the learners to predict on what they are going to learn next by using their existing knowledge and the educators is the active and vital initiator of motivation. On the other hand, inquiry arousal requires active participation from the learners whereby the educators provide opportunity for the learners to conduct hands-on activity and the educators also can asks questions or brainstorming session that trigger learners' critical thinking skills.

The next aspect to consider in the process of increasing learner's motivation is to ensure that the instruction and topic of the lesson is relevant to the learners. In order to do this, educators needs to use concrete language and examples that the learners are familiar with. According to Keller, there are three major strategies of creating relevance which are goal orientation, motive matching and familiarity. These three major strategies are further divided into few sub-categories. Within goal orientation educators needs to present worth of the lesson by describing on how the knowledge will help the learners and educators also needs to explain on the further usefulness of the lesson by informing on how the knowledge gained will help for future use for example when they are getting to a college and finding a job. Next, the motive matching strategy involves needs matching whereby the educators supposes to evaluate the learners and decides on the factors that the learners learn for example, because of achievement, risk taking, power or affiliation. In this strategy, learners are given choice to choose their own method when learning. The last strategy to achieve relevance in the lesson is familiarity. The idea of familiarity evolves around the concept of "be what you want them to do". Keller suggested that educators brings in role models for example guess speakers, video and having learners who finish their work first to serve as tutors so that the learners can imitate the same form of behavior. Additionally, educators also can make full use of student's experience and existing knowledge by showing the learners that they can use previous knowledge to learn more so that learners are able to connect their schemata and new knowledge.

The third aspect of ARCS model is confidence and it focuses on establishing positive expectation for achieving success among learners. According to this strategy, the learners' level of confidence is closely related to motivation and the efforts that the learners give. Thus, educators needs to give clear guideline on what the learners need to do, how the learners will be evaluated and also the time frame for the completion of the task. Keller offered three types of confidence building strategies which are performance requirements, success opportunity and personal control. First, in performance requirements, educators should provide the learners with learning standard and evaluation criteria so that it would help to establish positive expectations to succeed and the learners can manage their own learning. As for success opportunity, learners should be given opportunity to succeed by using multiple and challenging experience after they had succeed in one learning situation. Lastly, personal control suggests that learners need to take charge of the situation that happen around them, since they are the one who decide whether to succeed or fail.

The last aspect of this model is satisfaction, in which learners must obtain satisfaction or reward from learning experience. Feedback and reinforcement are important elements and when the learners appreciate the result, they will be motivated to learn. It shows that satisfaction is based on motivation in which it can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. According to Keller, there are three main strategies to promote satisfaction. First, intrinsic reinforcement whereby educators encourages and supports intrinsic enjoyment of the learning experience; second, extrinsic rewards that the educators can give to the learners in term of positive reinforcement and motivational feedback and lastly, equity, in which the educators will maintain consistent standards and consequences for success.

#### **DEFINITION OF BLENDED LEARNING:**

According to Wan Fatimah, Afza and Josefina (2008), blended learning or hybrid learning is describes as a learning environment that either combines teaching methods, delivery methods, media formats or a mixture of all these. Meanwhile, Colis and Moonen (2001) defined blended learning is a hybrid of traditional face-to-face and online learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and online, when online component becomes a natural extension of traditional classroom learning. Rovai and Jordan (2004) considered that blended learning is an important building block of the new schoolhouse that offers learners both flexibility and convenience which able to cater for working adults who decided to pursue postgraduate degree. Sivapunniam (2009) added up the terminology of blended learning by stating that blended learning is the combination of various aspects of traditional classroom, such as coaching, demonstrating, monitoring, explaining, facilitating etc with the various aspects of online learning. Additionally, Farahiza (2010) highlighted few definitions of blended learning that were given by previous researchers which are, blended learning is learning outside the traditional classroom using information technology for the delivery of the learning materials, a combination of two kinds of learning environment, physical classroom learning and online learning to enhance the learning outcomes; it is a combination of multiple delivery media designed to complement each other and promote learning and application learned behavior.

#### **APPROACHES FOR BLENDED LEARNING:**

In the process of implementing blended learning in classroom, the educator needs to know on the approaches for blended learning so that selection can be made in order to suit the needs of learners and also the educator his or herself. According to Valiathan (2002), there are three approaches of blended learning which are skill-driven learning, attitude-driven learning and competency-driven learning. Skill-driven learning is an approach which combines self-paced learning with instructor or facilitator's support in order to develop specific skills. This approach focuses on the concept that learning specific knowledge and skills in which it requires regular feedback and support from the educators or peer. Next, attitude-driven learning is the approach which combines various events and delivery media to develop specific behaviors. The content of this approach deals with developing new attitudes and behaviours in which it requires peer-to-peer interaction and a risk-free environment. Lastly, the competency- driven model is an approach which blends performance support tools with knowledge

management resources and mentoring to develop workplace competencies. This approach requires the learners to capture and transfer tacit knowledge, and learners must interact with and observe experts on the job; which indicate that educators will assign mentors to learners.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF BLENDED LEARNING:**

Sivapunniam (2009) stated that blended learning offers a welcome break from the monotony of classroom instruction since it allows the learners to make choices about their own learning on where and when they want to learn, what and how they want to learn and their goals in learning. With blended learning, educators can help the learners to realize on their own strengths and weaknesses and help them to carry out their learning process outside the classroom via online learning. Blended learning is not only effective but also enjoyable and motivating process because it caters to learners' diverse learning that can be achieved from of the interactive learning activities offered by online learning.

There are many researches conducted on the implementation of blended learning and majority of the researches revealed that blended learning offers positive impact towards teaching and learning process. Research conducted by Wan Fatimah, Afza and Josefina (2008) shows that learners are motivated and demonstrates positive perception towards blended learning approach in learning Mathematics which consists of face to face instruction, exercises from textbooks and developed courseware which was used in tutorial class and also made available on e-learning. In the same stance, Siew-Eng et al (2010) discovered that learners regardless in rural or urban area were satisfied with blended learning especially on the course content and materials that they can read, download and print at anytime. The learners also revealed that they can improve their information, communication and technology skills by using blended learning mode, because they can interact with friends and facilitators at anytime and the course was flexible in term of learning location, time and process. Research conducted by Rovai and Jordan (2004) shows that blended learning offered stronger feeling of community than fully online course and it exhibits similar sense of community as learners in traditional method. The same finding also recorded by Akkoyunlu and Soyly (2006), most learners who are actively participate in the forum have positive views about blended learning environment. Farahiza (2010) derived with benefits of blended learning in her conference's paper, she claimed that blended learning enhance social interaction, communication and collaboration, it offers flexibility and efficiency, it extends the reach and mobility, it optimizes development cost and time, it offers efficient and effective approach, it provides more choices about learning to learner, it increases learning resources and experience and lastly, it encourages independence and conviviality.

#### **DISADVANTAGES OF BLENDED LEARNING:**

Besides the advantages, there are also few disadvantages or challenges in using blended learning. Research conducted by Siew-Eng et al (2010) shows that even though learners were satisfied with blended learning mode, some of the learners complained that the system is not stable and they frequently could not access the web site and it causes inconvenient to them. As for the role of lecturer in blended learning mode, Hisham, Che Su and Hassan (2006) in their research revealed that, lecturers in that particular study have not adequately provided learning support to facilitate BL and they did not aware of their special role in providing learning support. Lecturers very often become catalysts and this is crucial in enabling learners to liberate their understanding. This finding can be supported by the finding of the research conducted by Fong et al (2005) in which lecturers often forget or neglect about response requirements and eventually, the late responses from lecturer will reflect negatively on the effectiveness of blended learning.

Anuwar (n.d) in his paper stated that there are many challenges that need to be overcome in order to enhance the effectiveness of e-learning. First, generally there is still a lack of awareness amongst the population especially the parents who feel that traditional learning mode is better. Second is the low adoption rate, in which many institutions are keen to embrace e-learning but

they still lack of the content, inadequate infrastructure together with the problem of digital divide especially to those who live in rural area. Next, in order to engage the content, it requires a rich combination of multimedia components. However due to bandwidth and connectivity limitations, downloading of engaging content to the learners will be slow and it may creates frustration and boredom among learners and it affects the ease of learning. Lastly, online learning requires a very high degree of self-motivation which is to be found lacking among learners in Malaysia.

### **IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION:**

Based on the articles above, I strongly believed that blended learning can be integrated into ARCS model and to motivate the adult learners in learning. ARCS model encourages the students to be more independent after they received clear guidelines on how to do the task and I believed that it will encourage the students to gain autonomy in learning. In Singapore, our neighborhood country, starting from 1990's the schools have adopted the mission of creating "Thinking schools, learning society" whereby it emphasizes on the connection between school and society. A thinking school is important since it functions as a hub to produce students who are learning to think and able to create knowledge. A thinking school managed to develop graduates who are highly motivated in life long learning, thereby creating a learning society. Singapore is one of the good examples of an Asian country that moving towards autonomy in education, even though there were lots of research conducted said that Asian students are not ready to change from teacher-centered approach of learning to self-directed learning.

According to Hedge (2000), few researchers such as Hofstede and Asma Abdullah had conducted researches on learner autonomy and they found out that culture may influence the progress of gaining autonomy in the process of learning due to few characteristics possessed by Asian people. Firstly, we Asians tend to live as collectivist society, whereby we are afraid to be different from our group or community compared to westerners, they like to be different because they are individualistic and that is why, autonomy is well established among Western students. Secondly, we are non-confrontational to the issue that we know that is totally wrong, in order to avoid other individual to lose face. Asians put prior attention to the feeling of others rather than doing the right thing. Lastly, the effect of power distance is obvious to Asians whereby we just accepting instruction from those who are more superior to us. The same situation occurs in learning process whereby students have heavy reliance on the teacher to give the right solution (instruction) which indirectly influenced them to have negative perceptions on their own ability to produce the right and acceptable answers.

In tertiary level of education, learners need to be independent in the sense that they can make decision on their and choose their own way of constructing their own meaning regarding certain topic discussed in class. With the help of technology, everything is possible for the students to work on their assignment and discuss with peers in order to achieve their goals in completing the task. By implementing blended learning in classroom, learners are no longer confined in the classroom because they are still able to learn outside the classroom via online interaction with lecturers and friends.

Besides autonomy, educators also need to focus on learners' learning style and learning condition. This is important to ensure that the learners are motivated to learn and the learning process becomes more effective. Healey and Jenkins (2000) highlighted that there are four types of learning styles (cited in Cooze and Barbour, 2005), which are assimilators, convergers, accommodators and divergers. Learners who belong to assimilators learning style will learn best when presented with sound logical theories to consider and this type of learners are identified as required the most support in e-learning. Next, convergers learners prefer to be provided with practical applications of the concepts and theories. Accommodators learners learn best when they are allowed to gain 'hands on' experience. Lastly, divergers learners will learn best if they are allowed to observe and gather a wide range of information. Learners who are identified as divergers and accommodators required less support in e-learning due to their reliance upon their peers rather than the lecturer and convergers were the most active in e-learning environment.

In conclusion, educators should be aware of the power and potential offered by technology and they need to be skillful in implementing technology in classroom by taking into consideration of learners' needs and ability. Educators should be able to blend all these elements together so that it will offer a great learning experience to every learner. A well blended learning approach is expected to be able to cater for students with diverse needs. Educators should not be afraid to integrate technology in classroom and they should be able to balance on their perspectives of learning process with the growing and increasing expectations of a new generation of technology savvy learners.

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