

Motivation of Postgraduate Learners in Pursuing Their Doctoral Degree Through Collaborative Learning

ZULAIKA ZAKARIAH RAEMAH ABDULLAH HASHIM NURULJANNAH MUSA
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Introduction

- The **attrition rate** among the part timers pursuing Doctoral Degree have increased.
- An average of 4.84% years are needed for a graduate to complete their thesis (Abidin & Ismail, 2011).
- The question is **how do universities motivate** their postgraduate learners to continue with their education?
- To find out **what motivates adult learners** in pursuing their doctoral degree to complete their thesis in a part time and open distance learning setup.

Literature Review

Motivation according to Batemen and Snell (2013), “forces that energise, direct and sustain a person’s effort”.

Hsieh (2014) found students in **collaborative learning environment and constantly in context with their mentors are highly motivated.**

Pardasani, Goldkind, Heyman, and Cross-Denny, (2012) argued that the **student motivation to complete their course work was the result of being pushed by their friends and peers and not by their instructors.**

Mazer (2013) found support that students who are in **close contact with their instructors tend to be more engaged in their learning and will focus more on the content of their studies.** The reason being the characteristic of instructors and face to face contact will awaken the intellectual aspect of the student.

Deschaine and Whale (2017) **not only learners on-line wanted to interact fully with their peers or their instructors rather they were there due to more personal reasons such as to develop their professional career.** They suggested in order to get more learners to be engaged and participate with the online learning, instructors need to be familiar with the learning management system well.

Method

- Interview with **5 learners** undergoing PhD and DBA in open university
- Under a supervision of 1 supervisor
- Age between **30 to 56 years** old
- **3 Male** and **2 Female** learners
- Data was analysed based on semi-structured interview questions
- Each audio was listened carefully line by line

Findings

1. Motivation **could be linked to collaborative learning** between learners

"We do encourage; we do push everyone to get to complete their papers but at the same time we have this (f2f) gathering. Sometimes people are shy, but we know that actually people are at their same spot, same weakness".

: "I could say that from zero to hero. A lot of progress, a lot improvement, I want to say about a peer. When I first saw him, he doesn't know anything about research and now I can see clearly the framework, the research problem and he is ready for proposal defense."

Findings

2. **Supervisor's support** in motivating postgraduate learners is important

"I could ask my supervisor from whenever we want, whenever we like, wherever we are. Easily reachable. Promptness is important because sometimes it's the time pressure. Supervisors encouragement, it will be a motivation for me and if she doesn't reply it demotivates me. But she always replies".
However, if the reply is later than anticipated, the responder reported: "When she replies I feel better about myself. PhD is tough. When she replies I feel motivated. If not, I feel alone and lost".

Findings

3. **Spiritual intelligence** as a personality trait to motivate postgraduate learners

“ I would always rely to Iqra, it means you have to read and you have to move on”

“We know that if we help others, we receive ‘pahala’ (reward) and also then someone else might help us in return”.

Conclusion

- This paper **explored the idea of what motivates part time postgraduate learners** to stay engaged in a collective e-learning environment of a private university in Malaysia.
- Findings indicate that the respondents felt that collaborative learning could cultivate motivation among peers.
- **Helping peers** collectively in a group, **enables the learners to strive towards achieving their goals by mentoring and throwing encouraging** remarks to one another.
- this study **shows high reliance towards their supervisor to guide them** through their dissertation writing.

Limitations

- the findings were derived from a relatively **small sample** and this study although it may not be able to provide a generalizable result, it is suggested that the theme could be used and expanded for further investigation.
- This study **is initiated to explore the concept** of motivation and collaborative learning **among part-time postgraduate's learners** within the Business and Management cluster offered by the university.
- The **spirituality intelligence (SI) concept could also be used in future studies** to validate the model to other clusters and among undergraduate learners.