

# A BREEZE OR A SNEEZE?

## Responses From Tutors On Tutoring Adult Learners

By Lilian Kek Siew Yick

**What do our lead tutors and tutors think of adult learners and adult learning? Are there any differences between teaching adult learners at OUM and teaching fresh school-leavers? Here are some of the responses we received.**

“Fresh school-leavers are more focused. Adult learners tend to participate more in terms of discussions.”

*Dr Sapora Sipon  
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

“Adult learners tend to ask better-quality questions and are more responsive to tutors. They are more receptive compared to fresh school-leavers.”

*Mohd Irwan Mohd Mubarak  
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

“Adult learners are individuals with working experience but without any paper qualification. I believe they tend to understand better and learn faster compared to fresh school-leavers. Adult learners can understand better if we give them practical examples instead of just theories.

*Kevin Kong  
Sibu Learning Centre*

“There are some differences between teaching adult learners at OUM and teaching fresh school-leavers. Adult learners are very experienced in their field of work. They have the intrinsic motivation and desire to improve themselves academically. As tutors, we need to treat them with dignity and respect without compromising on the quality of teaching. Most of my adult learners do not prefer 100% lectures as this bores them. They prefer to be given a task or situation and ample opportunities to have discussions.”

*Law Sze Yung  
Sibu Learning Centre*

“Fresh school-leavers have gone through the basic education system to prepare them for higher learning, while adult learners suffer from an education gap and struggle to cope with learning. Adult learners prefer to relate their daily activities to their learning as this makes it more interesting.”

*Koh Yew Meng  
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

“Adult learning is a process of knowledge transfer and sharing among working adults who seek advancement in their careers. Adults carry a significant weight of experience. While fresh school-leavers are adapting and entering a new phase of their lives, adult learners are more independent. I see myself as a ‘bus driver’ to these OUM learners and I believe that by giving lots of real-world examples in relation to theories, my passengers will get a clearer view.”

*Abby Ashraff Saprudin  
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

“Basically, fresh school-leavers are very energetic when seeking information; they pick up and digest information easily. It is quite challenging to make OUM learners understand concepts as they cannot digest information correctly. I encourage learners’ participation in discussions by giving them questions that I hope can trigger their mind towards critical thinking.”

*Dr Fahrul Zamanhuyop  
Johor Learning Centre*

“Adult learners are slightly more mature (depending on their age) and most have working experience that forms a useful component in their learning repertoire. Tutors should play the role of facilitators and motivators by training them with the necessary knowledge and skills of learning. Learners, on the other hand, should take a more proactive role (ask, explore, experiment, read, etc.) rather than playing the passive role of mere note-takers or copycats.”

*Dr Berhannudin Mohd Salleh  
Batu Pahat Learning Centre*

“Adult learners are people who have left school for some reason or other and are now going back to study to seek new knowledge. They have lots of commitments but little time and resources. Most of them face problems in their studies as well as the need to make adjustments to their lifestyles in order to handle the courses that they have signed up for. Compared to fresh school-leavers, adult learners need to put in more effort to improve their studies and IT skills as well as their competency in English.”

*Koay Soon Yuan  
Taiping Learning Centre*

“There are significant differences between teaching adult learners at OUM and teaching fresh school-leavers. Fresh school-leavers are more receptive but need to be spoon-fed while adult learners are more outspoken due to their personal exposure and interaction with the general public. In addition, adult learners tend to be more demanding while fresh school-leavers tend to be more passive rather than proactive.”

*Chen Nguk Fa George  
Sibu Learning Centre*

“Adult learning may be activity-oriented, learning-oriented and even socially-oriented. At OUM, there are different standards of adult learners. In my opinion, drilling is the best method to teach Mathematics. Hardworking learners will gain a lot from the course. On the other hand, fresh school-leavers listen more to what we teach and tend to follow instruction more closely.”

*Teng Hie Ping  
Sibu Learning Centre*

“Adult learning is all about change – in attitude, knowledge, behaviour, skills, how we think and productivity. There are many significant differences between adult learners and fresh school-leavers. Adult learners are much more self-directed and take responsibility for their learning experiences. Adult learners are learner-oriented, unlike fresh school-leavers who prefer to be teacher-oriented and expect to be spoon-fed by their lecturers. Adult learners have vast life experiences to bring to and support new learning. They also prefer a practical and immediately relevant approach to their studies and would better appreciate a subject if it is relevant to their field.”

*Segar Raja M  
Kedah Learning Centre*

“Adult learning or andragogy views teaching and learning from a different perspective – where learners have prior knowledge and experience, and use these as part of their learning process. Tutors need to incorporate these prior knowledge and experience into their teaching methodology.”

*Vijaya Malar Arumugam  
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

“I try to employ the open discussion approach since adult learners are more experienced. However, learners still prefer lectures rather than tutorials.”

*Izdihar Baharin @ Md Daud  
Shah Alam Learning Centre*

“Adult learners are often busy people with many commitments and a lack of time to pursue academic endeavours. So, they have to learn using a blend of theoretical grounding as well as by harnessing their work experience to solve real-life problems and discuss theoretical tasks. Group work is much preferred by adult learners as they could synergise their experiences and thoughts with adult peers. Adults will participate actively if the topic is their forte at work. Else, they will listen passively and behave like passengers in class.”

*Goh Thian Hee  
Penang Learning Centre*

“Adult learners usually study with a purpose. It can be either to upgrade their knowledge and skills for their present job or to find a better job. They are more matured and enjoy meaningful learning more than theoretical learning. Fresh school-leavers, on the other hand, do not have a clear direction of their studies compared to adult learners. They try to ‘absorb’ as much as possible whatever is offered by the lecturers with little questions on the validity, reliability and applicability of the knowledge. The learning process for adults must be meaningful to their jobs.

Quite a number of OUM learners still have the mindset of ‘fresh school-leavers.’ They want to be spoon-fed rather than enjoy the process of meaningful learning. Hence, I think Learning Skills for ODL (OUMH 1103) is a good course for them to start with. It is important to ensure that they have the right attitude to enjoy and benefit from OUM’s modes of learning.”

*Dr Chai Bui Khiun  
Sarawak Learning Centre*