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25

DEEPENING AND WIDENING LEARNING

At a time when the practice of lifelong learning is gaining foothold in Malaysia, it is worth pausing to reflect on our understanding of learning and the limits we put to it, consciously or otherwise. What is learning and how much learning is enough? Is knowing the contents of a module by heart considered learning? Is learning considered learning if we are unable to apply what we have learnt in real-life situations? Do we need to unlearn some of the things we have learnt? Do we as tutors learn anything noteworthy as we guide our learners in their learning journeys? These constitute some of the leading questions interrogated in this issue of TCX.

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ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is an OUM e-newsletter that provides a dedicated link between the University and its tutors. It serves as a channel for news and updates on tutor-related events and as a platform for the sharing of views, experiences and tips on best practices in university teaching and learning.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

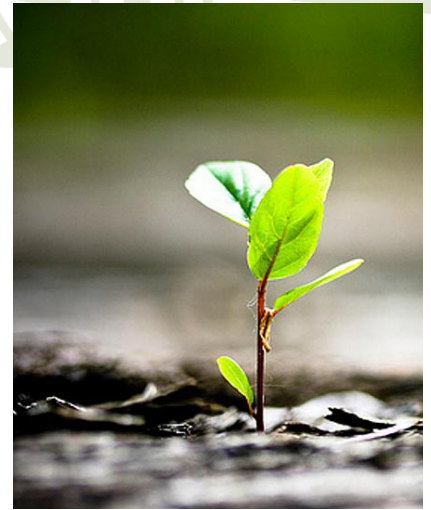
Learning, unlearning. The two go so well together. Like coffee and cream. Rice and curry. Or broken teeth on blood curdle. The last image is a way of invoking the “violence” of learning/unlearning, which is all too often either overlooked or covered over by sunshiny images we attach to learning/unlearning. No doubt, learning/unlearning is good for us in the same way that vitamins are good for us too. What is missing in the former scenario, however, is the “violent” dimension of what it really means to learn/unlearn.

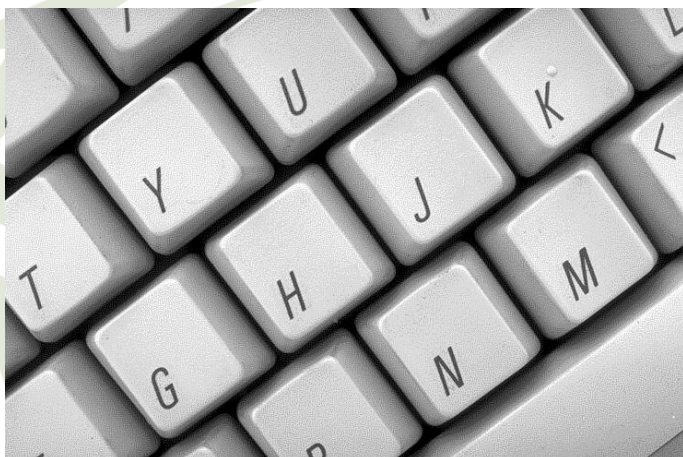
We tend to forget that learning/unlearning is never a detached activity. Real learning/unlearning is always inextricably tied to our sense of ourselves and the world around us. We repeatedly create, destroy and recreate who we are inside as we learn/unlearn, so much so that we are in a sense what we learn/unlearn in emotionally, cognitively and spiritually complex ways.

This issue is all about learning/unlearning – the challenges, the rewards, the resistance, the difficulties, the blood, sweat and tears. All these apply not only to our learners but also, perhaps more so, to us as educators. The Editorial Team has certainly benefited from revisiting learning/unlearning while preparing this issue and we hope you will too.

Dr David C.L. Lim

Chief Editor





OUM SYSTEM IS CONDUCTIVE FOR NEW TUTORS

This is my first semester teaching at OUM and I have to say that I am very impressed with the whole system. Everything seems to be in place such as the online system, modules and trainings. Although tutoring is not entirely new to me (I have taught at several private institutions for many years), I am new to OUM's online teaching environment. However, the staff from CTMD guided me along with other tutors so much so that I now know what to do as a tutor. Here, I would like to commend the centre for doing a good job.

*Caroline Anne Justin
Gaya Learning Centre, Sabah*

Thank you for the nice words. We are trying our best to provide our tutors with relevant tutoring skills by stressing the importance of teaching strategies to encourage adult learners in the ODL environment. We know for a fact it is different conducting tutorials in an ODL context compared to traditional and conventional teaching in public universities. We at CTMD truly appreciate your comments very much.

*Assoc Prof Dr Santhi Raghavan
Centre for Tutor Management and Development (CTMD)*

IMPROVEMENTS TO BENEFIT LEARNERS

I have been teaching at OUM since 2002 and I am quite happy with the infrastructure here such as the classrooms and so on. Nevertheless, there are some areas for improvement.

One area discussed in the previous TCX issue was modules. In Australia, the modules for ODL learners are far more interactive than those at OUM. Our modules usually ask our learners to visit relevant sites and so on. Being Malaysian, our learners' mentality is exam-oriented and they are often not bothered to go to these sites, thus defeating the purpose

of the exercise. In addition, some modules have massive mistakes and are not updated. It is a pity because most learners depend 100% on the modules.

Another aspect is online learning. I propose that OUM has a window time for tutor-learner interaction. This means setting aside a particular timeframe whereby they go online to chat on subject-related issues and assignments. The interaction between tutor and learners needs to be more comprehensive. Most learners go online for the sake of getting extra marks and this needs to be changed. Having a timeframe for each assignment can ensure continuous learning on the part of the learners.

*Dharshan Singh
Sembulan Learning Centre, Sabah*

Thank you for your feedback on online learning. Your proposal concerning the timeframe is being used by some of our tutors. These tutors and their learners go online at a specific time on a particular day to discuss subject-related issues and assignments. I am also pleased to inform you that OUM plans to introduce a simpler myLMS interface in the January 2010 semester to facilitate effective teaching and learning at OUM.

Assoc Prof Dr Santhi Raghavan, CTMD

TCX NEEDS TO BE MORE DIVERSE

I clicked on the TCX website early this year and found it to be uninteresting. I am into multimedia and IT, so I find the website lacking in the aspect of multimedia presentation. In terms of contents, it does not cover a wide array of subjects. This is the same for other OUM resources like the online library. Too much emphasis is given to subjects like management and I find it hard to look for information on multimedia technology.

*Brenda Anne Stephen
Likas Learning Centre, Sabah*

Thank you for your constructive comments.

The Editor

We welcome letters from our readers on any issue that may be of concern to you. You may use a pseudonym if you wish but please mention which learning centre you are from. Please e-mail us at tcx@oum.edu.my.



IMPORTANT DATES

OMES Deadlines

PROGRAMME	ACTIVITY	DATE (2009)
Undergraduate	Key in marks for assignment and quizzes*	9 – 22 Nov
	Key in marks for online participation*	1 – 7 Dec
	<i>*Except for seven MCQ-format subjects</i>	
Postgraduate	Key in marks for Assignment 1	26 Oct – 8 Nov
	Key in marks for Assignment 2	23 Nov – 6 Dec
	Key in marks for online participation	19 – 27 Dec

Upcoming Activities

ACTIVITY	DATE (2009)	REMARKS
Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) Visit	7 – 8 Nov	Melaka Learning Centre: Bachelor of Multimedia Communication with Honours
	20 – 21 Nov	Kelantan Learning Centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Education (Civil Engineering) with Honours • Bachelor of Education (Electrical Engineering) with Honours • Bachelor of Education (Mechanical Engineering) with Honours • Bachelor of Education (Science) with Honours • Bachelor of Education (Mathematics) with Honours
	21 – 22 Nov	Johor Learning Centre: Diploma in Management
7th OUM Convocation Ceremony	14 – 18 Nov	Merdeka Hall, Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur
Regional Colloquium for Tutors (Northern Region)	5 – 6 Dec	Selected tutors and facilitators from the Perak, Penang, Kedah and Perlis learning centres as well as the subject matter experts, learning centre administrators, academicians, management and administrative staff. Venue: Cinta Sayang Golf and Country Resort, Sg Petani, Kedah.
Monitoring of New/ Senior Tutors and Facilitators	Tutorials/ Seminars 1-5	Observation during tutorials/seminars will be conducted by Lead Tutors and academic staff.
Teaching Permit Application	Tutorial 3	Submit your application form to the administrator at your learning centre.

TEACHING AND LEARNING: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

By Assoc Prof Dr Nagarajah Lee Hun Leong

Teaching and learning are not a question of knowledge acquisition and skill enhancement anymore. They are about creating challenging, engaging and authentic educational experiences that produce lifelong learners. The debate on effective teaching and learning has existed since early civilisation but this issue occupies the centre stage in most intellectual discourse among educationists and researchers till today.

Previously, teachers were viewed as gurus, derived from the term “mahaguru” which originated from Indian civilisation. It portrayed a teacher as someone who knew everything in a field while a good learner was one who followed the teacher and learned religiously.

With such a paradigm, the common questions that played in teachers’ minds were: Are we teaching the right things? Are we teaching enough? Is the environment suitable for effective teaching? These led to the emergence of various methods for effective teaching. One example was rote learning, which was the main method used by gurus to teach their disciples.

Later, there emerged a spate of “new” curricula and calls for inquiry-based pedagogy that facilitated learners to think rather than to simply regurgitate knowledge learned. Many educationists said the only method for acquiring genuine understanding was through self-motivated independent discovery.

The effect of globalisation intensified the debate on teaching and learning. This debate will continue as long as the human race exists. Thomas Friedman (2007) metaphorically stated that “we live in a flat world” and went on to explain the changes in the worldview on education brought about by global economic, educational and technological forces. He succinctly put that the emphasis now was on empowering people to compete, connect and collaborate. Thus, there was a need for learners who were well rounded, equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, and more importantly, the right attitude.

Globalisation has opened the floodgates of information, so learning needs to be redefined. The focus should be on meaning creation rather than regurgitation. The concept of



“The focus should be on meaning creation rather than regurgitation”

teachers being gurus and learners being obedient followers belongs in the past. Content knowledge is necessary but insufficient. Teaching time is finite but content is virtually infinite, so what need to be taught are the skills that allow one to continually learn and construct knowledge. Simply accumulating information without learning to apply it results in what Alfred North Whitehead (1929) called inert ideas that remain stale or dead unless put to good use.

Learners need to be taught to make sense of information, apply knowledge and think across disciplines. The kind of learning that stimulates the imagination and teaches how to construct meaning and make disparate information coherent is paramount in developing effective self-directed learners. This involves the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively and make decisions wisely.

Learning needs an appropriate state of mind. The essence for one to become an effective learner faces three common barriers in terms of: 1) competency, 2) emotions, and 3) beliefs. In order to become an effective learner, one needs to break the barriers. We always say learning is the onus of learners. What is the role of tutors then? If we can be instrumental in helping learners to break these barriers, it will be a great service to education. **TCX**

INTERVIEW WITH DR WIDAD OTHMAN

By Gowri Venkatesan



“The onus is on the learning institution to make learning enjoyable for learners”

ASSOC PROF DR WIDAD OTHMAN joined OUM in 2006 as the head of the Tutor Management Centre. In 2007, she became the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Languages. TCX had the privilege of talking to her on how she viewed learning. Below are excerpts from the interview.

Gowri: *What is your personal take on learning?*

Dr Widad: Learning is a beautiful process that provides knowledge. Most people desire to become knowledgeable so that success will come their way. Learning is a time-tested method to gain knowledge; no one can deny that. It should be a continuous process. We will stagnate if we cease to learn. The best way to keep abreast of the latest developments is by learning. I strongly feel that age should not be used as a pretext to elude learning. That said, learning is not confined to schools and universities. Life itself is an excellent teacher if we view it positively.

Gowri: *Is there any difference between learning today and when you were a student?*

Dr Widad: There has been a sea of change. The advent of technology has made learning much easier compared to those days. People can now learn at the push of a button from the confines of their homes. Information can be easily sourced from the Internet. Earlier, we had no choice but to spend hours in the library looking for learning materials. Though a physical library is very much relevant till today, learners have the option of logging into e-libraries from a place convenient to them to do research and revision. Anyway, technology itself does not guarantee learning excellence. Without self-discipline, learners cannot go far no matter how advanced the technology is.

Gowri: *What do you recommend as effective strategies for learning?*

Dr Widad: Each person has a style of learning. The most important question is: How effective is it? Note-taking and mind-mapping are popular learning methods. I would recommend learners to adopt a method they are comfortable with and stick to it. If they merely read the text, there will come a time when the eyes will be taking in the words but not the mind. Revision must be done on a consistent basis and not only when examinations are around the corner. Cramming a lot of information in a short time may lead a learner to pass an examination but not excel in it. Group study is also ideal as it fuels information-sharing. When many heads are put together, there is synergy.

Gowri: *How do young people perceive learning nowadays?*

Dr Widad: Learning has become a burden for many youngsters. Paper qualification is the primary motive for learning. Without paper qualifications, career prospects are dim. So, they are forced to learn and eventually, they develop a hostile feeling towards learning. I have met many learners who mug and mug, and then regurgitate facts in the exam hall. They forget what they have learnt the minute the exam is over. Learning should be more meaningful than this.

Learning may be a hassle for adult learners but they need it for career progression. This is why we have cases of adult learners cheating or plagiarising. A person can attain academic excellence when he or she enjoys learning. I believe the onus is on the learning institution to make learning enjoyable for learners.

Gowri: *How can tutors motivate OUM learners?*

Dr Widad: Besides doing their prescribed duties, they should not mind walking the extra mile. OUM learners come from different walks of life with the majority having to juggle work commitments with family life, and this takes a toll on them. This is where tutors/facilitators come in. They can motivate learners to do well in their studies. It is a pity to see some learners give up on their studies midway due to pressure. If tutors/facilitators come across such learners, they should not hesitate to spend extra time with them to boost their spirits. Our hard work will pay off the day the graduates walk up the stage to receive their scrolls with smiling faces. **TCX**

LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

By Nazrai Ahmad Zabidi

According to Tony Buzan, the world authority on mind mapping and thinking skills, “Learning how to learn is life’s most important skill.” This is indeed true for most of our learners who are mostly working adults who had left school or college for years, maybe even decades. These learners are accustomed to learning in the working environment through the hands-on approach, instructions, experience and so on. A few may have never seen a computer, let alone use the Internet. Hence, returning to university may be challenging for them, especially when it comes to learning.

Assoc Prof Dr Abdul Wahab Abdul Ghani, from the Faculty of Education and Languages (FEL), believes that learners in general have no problems in learning. The fact that they enrolled in university indicates their confidence in their learning skills. However, if they intend to excel in their studies, they need to learn new skills as well as learn how to learn these skills.

There are certain skills that learners need to master such as how to access myLMS and the digital library. Dr Wahab is of the opinion that more than one tutorial should be conducted to ensure that learners truly understand these skills.

Some learners may find it difficult to accept new knowledge that they consider as irrelevant such as mathematics. Here, Dr Wahab suggests the use of multimedia techniques such as e-content. However, not all learners will respond positively to subjects that they do not like. Hence, other than teaching them the techniques of learning, the tutor must also provide motivation such as telling them about the benefits of mathematics or other technical subjects in their daily life.

Siti Farina Sheikh Mohamed from FEL concurs that mathematics is unpopular among some learners. However, OUM has introduced a number of innovations to assist learners in learning this subject. One example is the Mathematics Resource Centre (MRC). In the MRC portal, learners can access many websites related to mathematics as well as post questions to tutors. Soon, another portal on the English Language will be put up in myLMS.

Another technique is the supplemental instructor’s technique used by Richard Ng from the Perak Learning Centre. Here, learners who are strong in this subject are



“Learning how to learn is life’s most important skill”

taught various ways to be math mentors for weak learners. In short, they learn how to learn by being instructors themselves.

Mohamad Ayub Mat Zain, the manager of the Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning, agrees with Dr Wahab. According to him, all open entry learners are required to attend a one-day Learning Skills Workshop. During this workshop, learners learn how to do assignments, take notes and use the digital library. Another vital skill is time management. Students learn how to allocate their time effectively so that they can study and juggle other aspects of life like family and work.

Mohamad Ayub strongly believes that the workshop has achieved its objective of teaching learners how to learn. Prior to this, there was no such workshop and many learners found it difficult to adapt to the university environment. As a result, many learners did not know how to use the myLMS and the digital library – some even had problems logging into myLMS. The introduction of the Learning Skills Workshop helped to reduce these problems.

In conclusion, OUM is well aware of the importance of learning how to learn. Tutors need to be aware of these facilities so that they can inform their learners. By helping the learners learn effectively, the tutors can look forward to more learner participation. TCX

UNLEARNING E-LEARNING

By Teo Hui Thian

Unlearning learning sounds like a paradox but it is a legitimate requirement, especially in this 21st century. Learning means to acquire knowledge or skills by instruction or study. Unlearning means to undo the learning. This is more complex than it seems as knowledge when acquired will become a part of you. How do you undo something that is already a part of you? A short answer to this would be to unlearn and relearn learning.

How can learning, unlearning and relearning take place in an e-learning environment and why must it happen? E-learning involves the use of technology to deliver learning programmes. Media such as CD-ROM, Internet, Intranet, wireless and mobile learning are used.

For an e-learning institution, the main concerns would be managing content development and the learning environment. For the learning part, we usually look at existing models and best practices. We also learn from our own experiences and environment. We talk to students to understand and meet their needs. With rapid development in e-learning technology, we have to unlearn what we have learned because what is relevant now will be obsolete soon. When we unlearn, we must be ready to relearn, replacing the old way of doing things with new ways such as embracing new technologies and providing a challenging and relevant learning environment to our students.

As mentioned earlier, managing content would be one area to look at seriously. To get ahead, we must ensure that our e-learning resources are relevant and ready for future application. Sometimes, this means creating content that will be relevant in five to ten years' time. For example, many books on academic writing still talk about how to write memos and formal letters at great length but allocate little space to topics such as e-mails, blogs and emerging discourse. The question is, would memos and formal letters still be relevant in five years' time with e-mails now being accepted as mainstream communication? Would the knowledge we provide our learners now still be relevant when they graduate?

On another note, we need to allow learners to customise their learning: what, how and when they want to learn. The range of customisation can be broad or narrow depending on what the institution wants to achieve. It can be cosmetic



“When we unlearn, we must be ready to relearn”

or content customisation or both. Cosmetic customisation involves font size (bigger fonts for visually challenged individuals), position of menu (depending on whether the individual is right- or left-handed), highlighting of text and how pages are presented (portrait or landscape). Cosmetic customisation creates a conducive interface for students.

Examples of content-based customisation include enabling learners to annotate, rearrange content, collaborate, hyperlink, discuss in forums or on bulletin boards, tag and cross reference the content intra and inter modules. While these cannot be fully achieved with existing methods, they can be done using a new breed of portable devices and customised applications that allow seamless mobility and connectivity. Learning science, for example, can be made more interesting by incorporating augmented reality software.

Imagine a learner using the camera function on his handphone to point at a hibiscus. The handphone software searches the database to match the image and a nanosecond later, summarised information on the hibiscus appears next to the picture. The learner does further research on the flower by tapping on the link button, which connects him to Internet resources, the module or the institution's database. Wouldn't this be a great e-learning environment?

Alvin Toffler summed it up well: “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.” **TCX**

WHAT IS LEARNING?

TUTORS' VIEWS

Compiled by Sharifah Rosfashida binti Syed Abd Latif

What do OUM tutors think of learning? Read on and find out.

Learning has never been about the passive absorption of knowledge. Rather, it is all about acquiring new knowledge and skills and learning to apply them in analysing and evaluating information in our daily lives. Today, we see the need for “interaction” for learning to happen. By this, I mean interaction between the learner and the material/content/module. This interaction is said to facilitate the linking of new knowledge with previous understanding. So, the challenge for us in OUM is to ensure that the content we provide will always have a high element of “interactivity”—interesting, relevant to the workplace and sufficiently challenging to the learner.

*P. Rajesh Kumar
Shah Alam (UI) Learning Centre*

Everyone should enjoy learning because it is fun. By learning, we can boost our powerful mind’s ability to solve problems or create new things. Everyone should understand his or her own learning style. People who understand and practise their learning style in daily life learn better. For example, according to Kolb, there are four types of learning styles – doer, feeler, watcher and thinker. Each learning style has its own strength. Individuals who understand and learn through their unique learning style will enjoy the learning process and achieve better in examinations and daily life. Always bear in mind that learning is a lifelong process that everyone must enjoy!

*Tee Tze Kiong
Batu Pahat Learning Centre*

Learning is the process of acquiring new knowledge, behaviour and skills as well as understanding different types of information. It is also called education process and personal development.

*Mohd Rahimi Che Jusoh
Serdang Raya Learning Centre*

Learning means being open to new ideas and knowledge; constantly upgrading yourself in all aspects of life and using all the resources available to you. Learning to me is a joy.

*Wardah
Bangi Learning Centre*

Learning is a lifelong process which should not be limited to age, gender and education background. It is a trial and error process to find the truth of a philosophy. Along the learning journey, one should be humble, enthusiastic, passionate and always keep the momentum alive. Avoid looking at the world through a keyhole. The world is huge and the law of the universe is beyond our imagination. Learning will bring you closer to the world and universe.

*Ho Jen Sim
Shah Alam (UI) Learning Centre*

Learning is about acquiring new knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, preferences and understanding. At OUM, learning occurs through three flexible modes – face-to-face tutoring, online discussions and self-managed learning. Learning at OUM will support each individual to become more independent in their thinking and decision making so that they are able to continue to learn the rest of their lives.

Learning at OUM is self-motivated and goal-oriented. Being self-motivated means being driven, focused, ready for objective discussion and open to positive learning. Goal orientation is often seen as an aspect of an individual’s motivation for learning. An individual’s goal orientation in learning will motivate him to work and study at the same time. This will increase his chance of success. Learning at OUM is a way to achieve success via quality learning.

*Siow Hing Siong
Seremban Learning Centre*

WHAT IS LEARNING? LEARNERS' VIEWS

Compiled by Richard Ng

What is learning? If the knowledge we acquire is not applicable in our daily lives, could it still be considered as learning? Are unlearning and relearning necessary? These are the questions posed to some learners. Below are their answers.

Learning is to understand, apply and implement what we have learned in our daily life. For me, life without knowledge is like just waiting for God to end your life. This is because it is only through learning that our brain works and keeps healthy till the end of our life.

Rosdy Abdullah (Age 40)

Learning is about our life and if we don't learn we will forever remain infants. Moreover, there is no limit to learning. If we are unable to apply what we have learned in real-life situations, it is not considered learning.

For example, if a football player practises 18 hours a day seven days a week as a defender but when it comes to the real match he fails, then he has not learned properly. He should realise that times have changed. He has to unlearn what he has learned in the past few years and relearn new techniques.

Fajrin Nur Mohamed Suhaibudin (Age 22)

Even if we are unable to apply what we learn in real life, it can be considered learning. I have just finished reading a book, *What Every Good Lawyer Should Know*, by Iain Campbell. I picked up a lot of knowledge even though I am not in the legal profession. We do need to unlearn some things in order to relearn because we have to keep up with the times. For example, we can do away with lining up at the post office to pay our bills, which we learned to do in the past, and now learn how to pay them through the Internet.

Chow Gin Loon (Age 53)

The purpose of learning is to apply it in our real life. We

learn grammar, science, mathematics and other subjects to improve our life. If what we learn is not applicable, then what use is it? People my age have to unlearn what we learned 40 years ago in order to relearn and catch up with the current times.

Tangaragie A/L S. Papu (Age 56)

Even if we cannot apply what we have learned in real-life situations, it is still learning for satisfaction. It is a bonus for our life and at least it could be passed down to our next generation. Who knows, maybe it could be used in their life.

Muhammad Azmi Mokhtar (Age 41)

Learning is an important process as every day contains a lot of learning elements which we sometimes do not realise. I work in a bank as a sales executive and I cannot take a rest from learning new things even for one day. There are a lot of changes in the organisation and we have to move fast and adapt to the changes.

Those who are complacent will be left behind. We are moving towards improving our lifestyle, knowledge and career. Learning the module by heart is only to pass exams. We are paying to get the degree but for me, I pay for the knowledge as well.

Noraini Jamil (Age 36)

There is so much to learn and even when we leave this world, there will be many things out there that we have not learned and discovered. Even if we are unable to apply what we have learned in real-life situations, there must be times when we can share what we have learned with others who may apply it in their life. We might eventually help others. Sharing what we know is something which we should all practise.

Chew Li Vann (Age 23)

ENHANCING LEARNING

Interview with Idris Ismail by Lilian Kek Siew Yick



“Tutors should synchronise their teaching methods with the changes”

IDRIS ISMAIL began tutoring at OUM’s learning centre in Ipoh in 2005. In this interview, he shares his opinions on deepening and widening learning.

Lilian: *What are your views on learning?*

Idris: Learning is part of knowledge development, in preparation for various kinds of challenges in life. There are two types of learning – conscious and unconscious. In addition, there are formal and informal ways of learning.

Lilian: *How different is learning during the various cycles of life?*

Idris: There is a wide difference. This is because different age groups reach maturity in learning at different times. The way we ask questions must suit learners’ age and ability.

Lilian: *What does it take for learning to be effective?*

Idris: Learning is effective when a person who has gone through the process of learning is able to produce output that is beneficial to self and society. Mutual understanding between learners and tutors on their respective responsibilities will make the process of learning more effective.

Lilian: *How could tutors contribute to effective learning?*

Idris: The learning environment is changing rapidly due to technological advancements. Tutors should synchronise their teaching methods with the changes. They must update their knowledge accordingly rather than just follow the traditional way of teaching.

Lilian: *What are the differences between “deepening” learning and “widening” learning?*

Idris: Widening learning means to open the door of learning as wide as possible to eligible applicants from a range of socio-economic, ethnic, racial or gender backgrounds throughout the country. It also means offering more disciplines which are relevant to our nation-building and existence or enhance our capabilities such as marine and outer space exploration. We can widen learning by doing thorough research on our processes, policies, pedagogies and practices of current higher learning. Radical changes or transformation must be carried out based on the results of the research.

Deepening learning is the way tutors act as facilitators, asking learners open-ended and powerful questions in order to peel the layers away from the real issue or answer. By doing this, everybody could realise their own great potential. Deepening learning also involves defining the clarity, accuracy, relevance, depth and significance of the knowledge.

Lilian: *How can both types of learning be encouraged?*

Idris: We need to expand our higher education system to deepen and widen learning in our country. This will equip learners with better tools to help the country compete with other nations regionally or globally. In order to materialise this goal, there must be strong political will and high public awareness. The present method of teaching in the classroom is not suitable for adult learners. In addition, many younger students want to earn a living and continue their studies on part-time basis only. Institutions of higher learning must come up with courses and programmes to cater to these needs. We should allow more new players in the higher

(Continued on next page)

learning business. Private universities know better about widening and deepening learning as they work closely with the private sector.

Lilian: *What is your opinion of learning as a lifelong activity?*

Idris: Learning comprises all learning activities performed by people throughout their life. The concept of lifelong learning is closely associated with continuous learning or professional development. To stop learning means to stop your professional development. The present retirement age is actually too low. Talented personnel must carry on contributing their expertise to help in building our nation through lifelong learning activities.

Lilian: *Do you have experience of unlearning and relearning?*

Idris: I worked for Telekom Malaysia (TM) for 36 years. When I joined OUM, I found it a bit difficult to get along in the education environment. However, my efforts to unlearn some habits which were not required in the learning environment were really fruitful. Carrying out sales activities while in TM needed me to make fast decisions. In the learning environment, I need a lot of patience to handle multi-age students. Both environments are really in contrast to each other. I took a few months to unlearn my business habits and learn new teaching methods and techniques.



Lilian: *What is your opinion on this statement – “While we teach, we learn”?*

Idris: William Glasser, an American psychiatrist, explained how we learn: 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we see and hear, 70% of what is discussed with others, 80% of what is experienced personally and 95% of what we teach to someone else.

That is the relationship between teaching and learning. What we teach others is actually what we most need to learn.

CTMD congratulates Idris Ismail on his recent appointment as a Lead Tutor at the Perak Learning Centre from the September 2009 semester onwards.



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ACTING AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

By Azeezah Jameelah

As tutors for adults, we are not teachers, using a child-centred model of instruction. Instead, we act as facilitators and agents of change, enabling learners to make decisions that change their thinking in ways that benefit them. In order to guide them so that they can make this change effectively, we need to know three factors and address them through our tutorials.

The first factor is the previous learning of adult learners. These learners possess a large bank of previous learning. This can be both an asset and a liability. It is an asset when they link new knowledge and skills to it. This linkage reduces anxiety about learning new areas. It can be a liability when it becomes a hindrance to learning something new. Learners might face difficulty in absorbing the new information because of interference from their existing knowledge. If the new information contradicts the existing knowledge, the learners might dismiss it. In this case, they need to unlearn the previous learning.

We can help by getting them to build bridges between the previous and new learning. This can be done by using analogies and common examples. We could also allow learners to explore what they already know about an area before we impart new knowledge. In addition, we need to give learners credit for what they already know or are able to do.

The second factor is the emotional framework of adult learners. Adults have established emotional frameworks consisting of values, attitudes and tendencies. Learning involves changing behaviours and sometimes, parts of the framework. All change can be disorienting and can cause anxiety.

Tutors can help to prevent or reduce this anxiety by allowing learners to hang on to established values, attitudes and tendencies as long as these do not get in the way of learning. We also need to respond to any verbal and non-verbal feelings that they express. All these efforts will go towards providing a learning environment that is non-threatening and less stressful for our learners.

The third factor is the self-concept of adult learners. Their self-esteem and ego are on the line when they are asked to try a new behaviour in front of their tutor and peers. Bad experiences in traditional education, feelings about authority and preoccupation with events outside the tutorial can and may affect tutorial experience. Learners also tend to take errors personally and are more likely to let these affect their self-esteem. Consequently, they tend to use tried and tested solutions and take fewer risks.

We can tackle this situation by providing learners with opportunities to identify what they want and need to learn; plan and carry out their own learning activities; and evaluate their own progress towards self-selected goals. Instead of playing the traditional role of teacher, we can assume the role of “learning resource.” It is also important that we treat learners as adults. Thus, we must avoid talking down to them or putting them in situations where they feel embarrassed.

Knowing the three factors and handling them as suggested may help you in getting your learners to unlearn obstructive previous lessons and learn useful new lessons. You may want to try out the techniques beginning from your next tutorial. You may be delightfully surprised with the results.

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ONLINE POLL

In my opinion, tutors should regard our learners as:

1. Experienced in learning techniques and capable of studying on their own.
2. Experienced in learning techniques but still need to be guided in some areas.
3. Adults who need to relearn some concepts.
4. New to learning techniques and need to be guided.

Please cast your votes online!



REGRET CITY

I had not really planned on taking this trip and yet I found myself packing rather hurriedly. This trip was going to be unpleasant. It is my annual “Guilt Trip.”

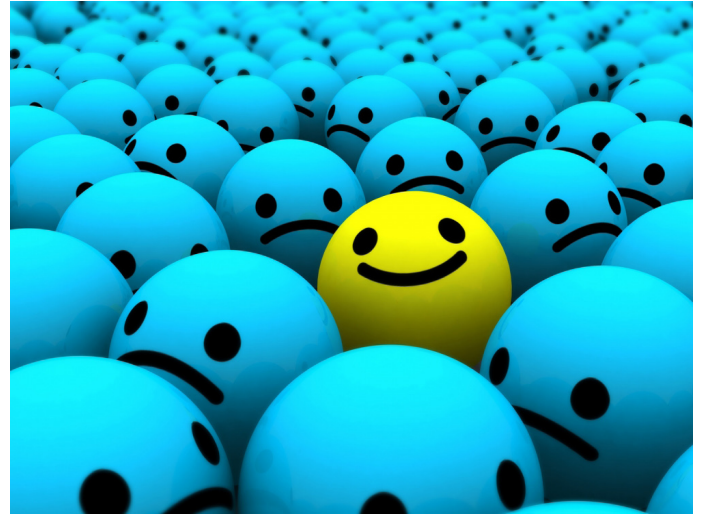
I got tickets to fly there on “Wish-I-Had” airlines. It was a very short flight. I got my “baggage,” which I could not check. I chose to carry it myself all the way. It was loaded down with a thousand memories of “what might have been.” No one greeted me as I entered the terminal to the Regret City International Airport. It is international because people worldwide come to this dismal town.

As I checked into the “Last Resort” Hotel, I noticed that they would be hosting the year’s most important event – the “Pity Party.” I was not going to miss that great social occasion. Many of the town’s leading citizens would be there.

First, there would be the “Done” family, comprising “Should Have,” “Would Have” and “Could Have.” Then came the “I Had” family, which was made up of old “Wish” and his children. Of course, the “Opportunities” family, consisting of “Missed” and “Lost,” would be present too. The biggest family there would be the “Yesterday’s.”

There are far too many of them to count but each one would have a sad story to share. Certainly, “Shattered Dreams” would make an appearance. The “It’s Their Fault” family would regale us with stories (excuses) about how things had failed in their life. Each story would be loudly applauded by the “Don’t Blame Me” and “I Couldn’t Help It” committee.

In short, I went to this party and as expected, I became very depressed. But as I thought about all the stories of past failures, it occurred to me that I could choose not to go to anymore “pity parties”!



“I cannot change yesterday but I do have the power to make today wonderful”

And I did not have to be depressed. I cannot change yesterday but I do have the power to make today wonderful. I can be happy, joyous, fulfilled, encouraged and encouraging. Am I sorry for the mistakes I made in the past? Yes! But there is no way to undo them. So I left Regret City immediately.

If you are planning a trip to Regret City, please cancel it. Instead, take a trip to a nice place called: “Starting Again.”

I like it so much that I made it my permanent residence. My neighbours, the “Been Forgiven” and the “We’re Saved,” are so very helpful. By the way, you don’t have to carry around the heavy baggage anymore either. That load is lifted from your shoulders upon arrival. But don’t take my word for it, find out for yourself. **TCX**

Adapted from: <http://www.motivational-well-being.com/motivational-stories-6.html>



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