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PROMOTING DEEP LEARNING

Deep learning is always desired over surface learning, the latter being the acquisition of detached disparate knowledge that is neither integrated into one's existing knowledge formation nor into one's conception of oneself and the world. Deep learning has been described as an approach and an attitude to learning that require learners to use higher order cognitive skills in a way that is furthermore personally meaningful. Its results are world(view) changing and infinitely more long-lasting. Not least, it leads to the ability to solve problems in new or unfamiliar contexts, which is precisely what merit-upholding employers and societies need in these times of radical flux and change. To want to promote deep learning is easy. But how do we, as tutors, promote it? And how do we know that we are actually promoting it when we claim that we are already doing so? These are the critical questions examined in TCX34.

REGULARS

Editor's Note ... p. 2

Letters to the Editor ... p. 3

Tutor Reminder ... p. 6

From the Dean's Office ... p. 14

Self-Help ... p. 16

FEATURES

- Towards The Next 10 Years:
Quality and Deep Learning at OUM ... p. 8
- Learners' Perception and Sense of Ownership:
The Keys to Deep Learning ... p. 10
- Surface vs Deep Learning : A Quick Guide ... p. 12
- Thoughts on Deep Learning ... p. 13



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ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is a non-profit 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

The often-repeated discourse of these contemporary times is that the amount of "information" available to those who seek it is redoubling every so often, and that, basically, there is already too much of it for anyone to sift through in order to find the most relevant to be used. Compounding to the overload is the fact that we are, Malaysians, that is, already working longer hours than the global average. We have been taking more and more work back home to complete, blurring the work-life distinction even more, to the detriment of our productivity and equilibrium. At a time when "free" time is shrinking, becoming rare, if not extinct, how do we find contiguous time to learn, let alone learn deeply, in order to better ourselves? More challenging, how do we, as tutors and facilitators, encourage our learners to learn and learn deeply?



This issue of TCX interrogates the sharp distinction between deep and shallow learning, and how OUM seeks to promote the former, a task made more urgent precisely because of the prevailing conditions of our times. TCX34 explores the importance of inculcating deep learning because deep learning is ultimately the only learning that counts. It is that which will allow our graduates to perform and thrive at the workplace and beyond. The challenge is a heavy one but it is something that we, as tutors and facilitators, must rise to because we must!

We hope at least some parts of this issue will provoke reflection on our practice as educators, and we hope you will be sufficiently provoked to want to write to us to share your views on the core issue at hand.

Best

Dr David CL Lim
Chief Editor

Teaching a Difficult Subject

Tutoring can be a challenge, especially when learners do not have the basic knowledge of a subject. I personally have this arduous task of teaching “Law and Technology” to mostly blue collar workers like IT staff and technicians.

I do sympathise with my learners because some of them are really at a loss when it comes to Law! Once I checked their discussions on myVLE, and found a number of them struggling to even ask the right questions. The problem is exacerbated when the learners start questioning the relevance of Law to their career or chosen field.

To tutors who face a similar situation, my advice is to be patient with the learners. Give them as many exercises as possible, and emphasise topics or areas that are likely to come out in examinations. I include examination questions from past semesters in my own exercise drills. I also conduct free tuition classes for those who are keen to deepen their understanding of the subject.

When a learner loathes a subject, there will be a tendency for him or her to look for shortcuts or take the easy way out. Tutors need to watch out for those who simply google for information and cut-and-paste what they find from the Internet. It is important to give them fair and early warning not to plagiarise.

I also have two other suggestions to share. First, I believe that 5% marks should be given for online participation. At least by doing so, learners will be motivated to go online and discuss with their tutors. Second, some marks should be given for attendance as well. I have taught a class in Bangi where there was only one learner. This can not only demotivate the learner but the tutor as well.

Despite the initial difficulties, my learners are faring quite well. At times, I will share my experience as a Law lecturer to boost their interest in the subject. Given time, I believe most of my learners can develop an interest in the subject that I teach.

Irini Ibrahim
Bangi Learning Centre



Dear Irini

Thank you for writing in. Teaching certain courses like Law can certainly be tricky. This is where your role as a tutor becomes all the more significant as the onus is on you to help your learners understand and gain interest in the subject matter. Of course, this also applies to other specialised courses.

I appreciate the stance that you have taken in keeping a watchful eye on the tendency of some learners to plagiarise. Let's all work together in discouraging this malpractice among our learners.

With respect to the award of marks for online participation, I would like to stress that, although we had in the past awarded marks for it, it was never intended to be a permanent practice. It was an interim measure introduced in the early days to motivate learners to go online. A substantial number of our learners have since developed the habit of going online, so we no longer need to award marks for online participation.

Further, we have often been reminded that the award of marks for online participation is akin to awarding marks to learners for coming to class in the conventional setting. It is not a defensible practice because the guiding principle is that marks should be awarded to learners for demonstrating their attainment of the stated learning outcomes through various forms of relevant assessment that have been instituted for a particular course.

Prof Dr Shaari Abd Hamid

**Deputy Vice President,
Institute of Teaching and Learning Advancement
(ITLA)**

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New and Improved Learning Management System

I have been teaching at OUM since 2006 and have noticed a number of changes, especially in its learning management system that is now known as myVLE.

Firstly, I am quite impressed with the overall features of the new system, especially the availability of learning materials. I find the video lectures to be well-organised and user-friendly.

I truly believe that learners can gain a lot from the new myVLE, particularly the Digital Library portal. Being school teachers, all my learners are required to perform research for their “Action Research in Education” course. Sometimes I ask them, “Why do you need external research resources when there are so many materials such as e-journals and e-book databases in OUM’s Digital Library?” During tutorials, I will teach my learners how to use these resources and it seems to be effective.

Although myVLE is great, I feel that learners are not fully utilising it. From my observation, it is ironic that learners seem happier with the previous myLMS than they are with this new upgraded system.

Badrul Zaman Abdul Latiff
IPG KP Learning Centre, Perlis

Dear Badrul Zaman

I am glad you are fully utilising the new myVLE. The upgrade was a timely decision as the previous myLMS had been in use since 2001 and OUM was looking to offer more features to all its users, tutors and learners alike. For the tutors specifically, myVLE also comes with features that allow easy tracking of learners’ online activities. I am sure that you will find these features useful. Please continue to encourage your learners to explore the various learning resources as well.

Your observation concerning the actual utilisation of myVLE is something we will certainly look into. Our aim is to continuously upgrade myVLE and suggestions from tutors are always welcomed.

Prof Dr Shaari Abd Hamid
Deputy Vice President,
Institute of Teaching and Learning Advancement
(ITLA)

Understanding Working Learners

Many first-time OUM tutors may find teaching adults learners quite daunting. From my eight years of experience at the University, I find that patience is vital when teaching them.

Unlike full-time learners in conventional universities, our learners are working people. Hence, our expectations of them must be different to that of regular university-goers. I remember several occasions when my undergraduate learners would come to class without being prepared or even reading the required text. I am sure other tutors have faced a similar situation as well.

Even if we should not expect too much of them, they will usually anticipate a lot from us as their tutors – especially during face-to-face tutorials. That is the time when they expect to gain the most amount of knowledge.

As a tutor, I respect their needs and try to be as accommodating as possible. I have found that close to 30 percent of my learners tend to be late in handing in their assignments for a multitude of reasons but I will usually give them an extra week provided they submit their work online.

In addition to that, tutors should make full use of learning materials like PowerPoint slides and the given modules. I am teaching Psychology and Counselling, and overall I find the corresponding modules helpful to the learners.

Indeed, at the end of the day, I feel that we have to make sure that all of our learners successfully complete their courses well. So, I know that at times, I must put in the extra effort to really teach them and not expect each and every one of them to learn independently. As I said earlier, they are working adults – some with work commitments, others with family responsibilities, and a majority have both to think about.

If you understand your learners well, then teaching them may not be as difficult as you think.

Manmohan Singh A/L Kartar Singh
Greenhill Learning Centre, Ipoh, Perak

Dear Manmohan

What you have demonstrated with your tutoring style is empathy for your learners. I agree with you that this is particularly important with adult learners, whose demands and temperaments are vastly different from full-time learners who attend conventional universities. Perhaps a tutor's capacity to show empathy in the classroom can even contribute to a more positive environment for your learners to experience deep learning – something that is dealt with in this issue of TCX.

*Prof Dr Shaari Abd Hamid
Deputy Vice President,
Institute of Teaching and Learning Advancement
(ITLA)*

The Benefits of Sharing

In the article “Fireworks in the Classroom” (TCX33), the third point in the top ten requirements of good teaching states that “Good teaching is about listening, questioning, being responsive, and remembering that each student and class is different”.

I believe that apart from these factors, another essential element is sharing. If you have anything to share with your learners, then you should go ahead and do so!

I am very fortunate because my learners are all school teachers and I have been a school teacher myself. So, I appreciate their problems and try to help them to find solutions for what they face in their respective schools. In some ways, this helps to motivate them in their studies.

Coming from the same background as my learners helps me to understand their needs better. Like other working people, teachers also look forward to promotions at their workplace. As a way of motivating them further, I always remind them that the reward of completing their studies will be better remuneration upon graduation.

**Tiong Hong Keong
IPG KG Learning Centre, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah**

Dear Tiong

Thank you for sharing your experience as an OUM tutor. The elements of good teaching practice are many, and I am sure every educator has his/her own ‘blend’ of them. As a tutor teaching open and distance adult learners, the most important thing is for you to find what works best for yourself as well as your learners, all according to your own capacity. It is good to know that you are able to share and connect with your learners – I am sure they really appreciate your openness. I would also like to remind all tutors that TCX is a platform for you to share your experience. We welcome anecdotes and stories of your own ‘blends’ of good teaching practices too!

*Prof Dr Shaari Abd Hamid
Deputy Vice President,
Institute of Teaching and Learning Advancement
(ITLA)*



Important Dates

TUTORIAL 1	Existing Learners: 23-25 September 2011 New Learners: 7-9 October 2011
TUTORIAL 2	Existing Learners: 7-9 October 2011 New Learners: 21-23 October 2011
TUTORIAL 3	Existing Learners: 21-23 October 2011 New Learners: 18-20 November 2011
ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES	Existing Learners: 2-13 November 2011 New Learners: 22-29 November 2011 New BPG Intake: 25 November 2011 (Tutors should remind their learners to use the special assignment template and to submit their assignments online. This applies only to courses that require learners to submit their assignments online.)
MID-TERM EXAMS	28-30 October 2011 & 11-13 November 2011
TUTORIAL 4	Existing Learners: 18-20 November 2011 New Learners: 2-4 December 2011
FINAL EXAMS	2-31 December 2011

On Assignments

For courses with assignments:

1. Assignments, Assignment Rubrics and Assignment Templates for Learners have been uploaded on myVLE.
2. On online submission of assignments, do note that there are different deadlines for existing learners, new learners and the new BPG intake (please see table above).
3. No late submission of assignments will be accepted.
4. Do remind learners to start working on their assignments early and not wait until the last day to submit their assignments online.
5. A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on assignments is available on the left sidebar menu on myVLE.

On the F2F Tutor Community Area & e-Tutor Community Area

Tutors are encouraged to log in to the F2F Tutor Community and e-Tutor Community forums for continued support and development. The forums also give tutors and e-tutors the opportunity to exchange and share experiences with other tutors/e-tutors. e-Tutors may also communicate with the e-Tutor Mentors in the e-Tutor Community forum.

e-Tutoring Updates, Reminders and Tips

1. e-Tutors are advised to log into their online discussion forums at least THREE times a week.
2. Learners' requests should be responded to within TWO working days.
3. Encourage active discussions by posting and redirecting questions where appropriate.
4. Post additional online resources related to subject-matter knowledge.
5. Log into the e-tutor community forum to share your views and to communicate with the mentors.
6. Automated email reminders will be sent out every Monday beginning 17 October 2011.
7. Regular reminders will be sent by mentors and the Head of e-Learning when necessary.
8. Please inform the Head of e-Learning of any prolonged absence and inability to facilitate the forum.
9. Payments for the May 2011 Semester are being processed. Email itla@oum.edu.my if you have queries on payment.

Contact Info

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F2F TUTOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS	a. LC Directors b. ITLA Staff ext . 2122/2490/2491 Email: itla@oum.edu.my or sitifarina@oum.edu.my
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MYVLE TECHNICAL ISSUES	myVLE Helpdesk – LMS team Email: mylms_admin@oum.edu.my

TOWARDS THE NEXT 10 YEARS: QUALITY AND DEEP LEARNING AT OUM

Interview by Dr David CL Lim (david@oum.edu.my)
with Prof Dr Mansor Fadzil, Senior Vice President of OUM

Dr David: OUM has been working on enhancing the quality of its delivery of education, especially the quality of its learning materials and assessment papers. Implicit in this pursuit of quality is the facilitation of deep learning, which has its obvious benefits. Can you share the concrete steps OUM is taking or will be taking to facilitate deep learning?

Prof Mansor: OUM has worked hard to ensure that its learners acquire more than just knowledge in a touch-and-go manner, and that they are able to fathom and integrate concepts into their mental web of knowledge so that these can be deployed later in life or work. This approach is embedded in our learning

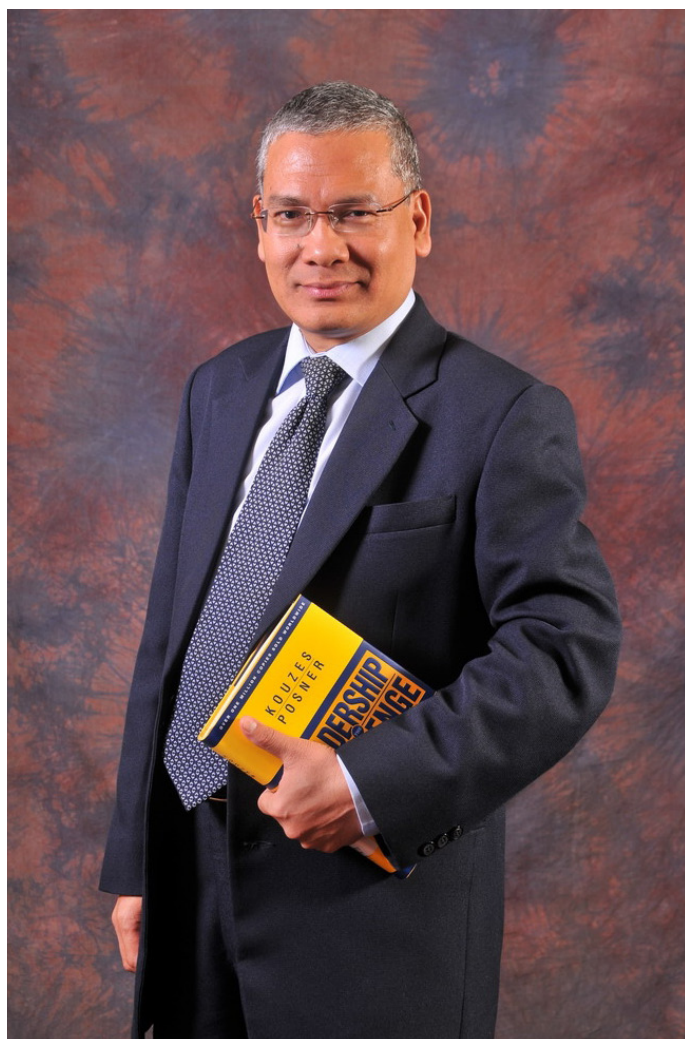
materials, blended pedagogy, as well as assessment. Sample questions in modules, assignment questions, and final exams, for instance, are designed to help learners connect theory and application. Similarly, we train and always encourage our tutors and facilitators to bring lessons to life through real-life examples and case-studies so that learners can draw connections between content, experience, and application. Having said that, we are also working continuously to improve the way we do things to ensure that deep learning goes deeper, ensuring that all our stakeholders – from internal academics, external tutors and subject-matter experts – are on the same page where promoting deep learning is concerned.

Dr David: How do you think deep learning ought to be measured? How, in other words, do you think we can ascertain with confidence that, at the end of the day, learners have indeed done the desired deep learning?

Prof Mansor: We can see evidence of deep learning in the quality of the assignments submitted by learners and in the answers they provide in their final exams. The ultimate measure, however, is how they perform at work after graduating. The tracer studies we have done reveal that the overwhelming majority of employers we surveyed view OUM graduates as uniquely capable. We should not rest on our laurels, though. We should work towards ensuring that the quality of our graduates surpasses even that of graduates from conventional universities.

“We train and always encourage our tutors and facilitators to bring lessons to life through real-life examples and case-studies so that learners can draw connections between content, experience, and application.”

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“We need to arm ourselves with knowledge on what works and what doesn’t, so that we are able to adopt and adapt the best practices for our purposes.”

Dr David: Most would agree that deep learning requires learners to dedicate large blocks of time to digest learning materials, to think and complete learning tasks, to engage in critical discussions with peers and tutors, and to reflect on their learning. Stealing five minutes here and half an hour there to learn does not seem sufficient to facilitate deep learning. Would you agree to an extent that the open and distance learning (ODL) mode of learning does not easily lend itself to deep learning, considering that many ODL learners are part-timers lacking the amount of time full-time learners spend in learning and learning deeply?

Prof Mansor: Certainly we would need to research and examine how deep learning could be applied more widely in the ODL context. We need to arm ourselves with knowledge on what works and what doesn’t, so that we are able to adopt and adapt the best practices for our purposes. For now, we want to continue to leverage on myVLE, our virtual learning platform, as we’ve found it to be extremely useful in encouraging collaborative learning, which, in significant ways, also promotes the kind of learning that goes beyond memorising and regurgitation.

Dr David: To facilitate deep learning, it is imperative that the academics, both internal staff and external tutors, doing the facilitation are themselves equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. What effort has OUM made to ensure that its academics are up to the task?

Prof Mansor: Having laid the operational foundation for the past 10 years, OUM is now embarking on enhancement programmes to strengthen the teaching-learning experience we offer. Programmes are being firmed up as we speak; they involve raising awareness about the centrality of quality in the educational services we offer, as well as research and training.

We will be doing this in stages, eventually across the nation.

Dr David: We have oftentimes heard employers complaining about learners who, having undergone their respective programmes, graduate without being able to actually perform since they only managed to scrape through with shallow learning, namely by memorising and regurgitating. In your view, how severe is the problem? How do you think the problem should be fixed?

Prof Mansor: As I mentioned earlier, our tracer studies have shown that employers find OUM graduates to be as good, if not better, than graduates from conventional universities. OUM graduates tend to do relatively better at the workplace because, as mature learners, they would have brought with them a wealth of experience to their studies. This in turn enabled them to master new ideas and concepts quicker, and to apply them in real life situations while studying, thus deepening their learning. To ensure that OUM graduates do even better, we are introducing four broad-based courses to OUM learners across disciplines. This means that all OUM learners will have the opportunity to learn and acquire such basic but crucial skills in Management, Communication, IT, and Thinking Skills and Problem Solving.

Dr David: Do you have any advice to our tutors and facilitators in relation to OUM’s promotion of deep learning?

Prof Mansor: It would be good if our tutors and facilitators could think of their learners as their family members; as their sons and daughters, or uncles and aunties. If they think of their learners as such, they’d do the right thing and give them the best that they could. Also, I would advise our tutors and facilitators to be engaging, whether during face-to-face meets or online. Be passionate about your role as mentors, too. If you do your best, your learners can only succeed in their educational journey.

Dr David: Thank you for your time, Prof. TCX

LEARNERS' PERCEPTION AND SENSE OF OWNERSHIP: THE KEYS TO DEEP LEARNING

Selina Marie Rogers (nselina@hotmail.com)

Recall your days as an undergraduate, and how you browsed through endless shelves of books at the university library. Did you usually pick a title that had direct relevance to the upcoming exam? Or did you choose a title that would have helped you to explore a topic of your own unique interest just so you could satiate your curiosity? My bet is that many did the former. The reason is simple: "Students do not, for example, simply read an article. They read it for a purpose connected with a course of study and in response to the requirements of those who teach a course" (Ramsden, 1992, p. 198).

When I was asked to write about deep learning, I wondered about the meaning of the term. I found that the meaning encompasses learners' attitude and approach to learning. Deep learning requires learners to relate their learning with their prior knowledge and experience while they analyse, synthesise, solve problems and think metacognitively.

In other words, learners use higher-order cognitive skills to integrate their learning with real-life experiences, rather than merely memorising facts they think they will be tested on. I also found that deep learning is about learners having a genuine interest in what they learn – being engaged with their learning for its own sake.

Now, how many of us truly did that during our university days? If you did, you must have been one of the few fortunate ones because most learners have been found to resort to surface learning such as rote learning or superficial understanding of facts for the sole purpose of scoring high grades in assessments.

As I read more and more about deep learning, I discovered that the term "learner perception" kept appearing in most of the articles. As Ramsden (1992, p. 200) notes:



"students' perceptions of assessment, teaching, and courses may influence their attitudes and approaches to studying ... Students' approaches depend on their interest in the task and their previous experience of the area to which it relates; these influences are themselves associated with their perceptions of how the work will be assessed and with the degree of choice over content and method of learning available to the student."

I have found this to be true – we do learn best what we believe we need to know. When we perceive something to be important or interesting to us, we are more intrinsically motivated to learn it because this learning process gives us a sense of ownership that ultimately becomes the strongest element in lasting learning. When we perceive something to be our own, in this case, the knowledge from learning, we naturally place a higher value on it.

With this in mind, how can students be encouraged to experience the relevance of a subject matter for their own understanding? How can students engage

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“When we perceive something to be important or interesting to us, we are more intrinsically motivated to learn it because this learning process gives us a sense of ownership that ultimately becomes the strongest element in lasting learning.”

in meaningful learning – learning something for the satisfaction of learning? How do we, as tutors, lead our learners to deep learning, rather than surface learning? Perhaps, we could reflect on the questions below:

(a) Do we tutor at the learners’ own level?

Very often, being ‘subject-matter experts’, we tend to go so far into our own area that we forget that learners’ knowledge is superficial, essentially, compared to ours. This lack of empathy and consideration is usually reflected in the way we tutor, which ultimately leads to learners getting lost during tutorials. So, naturally, learners resort to surface learning when they prepare for assessments.

(b) Do we show enthusiasm in the subject matter?

Since there is always time constraint in tutorials, we find ourselves rushing through the syllabus. How often have we injected ‘life’ into the tutorials? How often have we considered arousing learners’ interest in the subject matter so that they could develop personal meaning in learning or have a sense of ownership?

(c) Do we provide feedback on learners’ work?

Feedback on learners’ work influences learning. When learners do not receive sufficient information about their performance, this could make further learning an uphill task. On the other hand, if learners are aware of their performance and ways to further enhance it, their perception of learning and of themselves would somehow spur them to deep learning.

Let’s have another undergraduate flashback: a few days after taking a gruelling three-hour exam, you found that you had forgotten most of the facts you memorised. However, this did not matter to you

because you were not even interested in the subject matter in the first place.

Has this pattern repeated itself for you, and have you transferred it to your learners? This is the question we tutors need to ask ourselves over and over again to ensure that we do justice to our learners. **TCX**

Reference

1. Ramsden, P. (1992). *Learning to Teach in Higher Education: The Context of Learning in Academic Departments*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
2. Rhem, J. (1995). “Deep/Surface Approaches to Learning: An Introduction.” *The National Teaching & Learning Forum* 5(1).

*** Selina Marie Rogers is an OUM subject-matter expert (SME).**

SURFACE VS DEEP LEARNING: A QUICK GUIDE

Tengku Amina Munira (tg_munira@oum.edu.my)

Deep and surface approaches to learning are terms that are often heard in the academic world. The idea that learners approach learning through different styles has driven extensive research in higher education. Understanding the differences between deep and surface learning is critical for educators as it will help them determine the best methods and strategies to use in order to encourage their learners to learn in ways that matter most.

The table below provides a quick look at the distinctions between deep and surface learning.

	SURFACE LEARNING	DEEP LEARNING
KNOWLEDGE	Acquiring knowledge or information about a subject through the gathering of unrelated facts and without integration with prior knowledge	Increasing the knowledge and understanding of a subject by grasping underlying principles
APPLICATION	An ability to apply new knowledge to particular tasks and problems without transferability	An ability to apply newly understood principles in a variety of different contexts and situations
ENDURANCE	An ability to recall new information but usually only short-term in nature	Long-lasting personal change
TIME AND EFFORT	Doing just enough to complete assessment; spending only the time needed to meet minimum requirements	Going beyond what is required for assessment; spending time and effort on learning
ASKING QUESTIONS	Constructing knowledge by asking “how” rather than “why”; searching for facts	Constructing knowledge by asking “why” and not just “how”; searching for meanings
LEVEL OF RESEARCH	Using only the information provided	Thorough research for any given task
COGNITIVE EFFORT	Aiming to memorise; rote learning	Aiming to understand using higher-order cognitive skills (e.g. analysing, evaluating, synthesising, relating, etc)
IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL INTEREST	Spending most of the time on topics of personal interest	Aiming to satisfy curiosity and personal interest, but also pursuing topics with less personal interest

Adapted from:

Hay, D. B. (2007). “Using Concept Maps to Measure Deep, Surface and Non-Learning Outcomes.” *Studies in Higher Education* 32(1), pp. 39-57.

Hamm, S., & Robertson, I. (2010). “Preferences for Deep-Surface Learning: A Vocational Education Case Study Using a Multimedia Assessment Activity.” *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 26(7), pp. 951-965.

THOUGHTS ON DEEP LEARNING

OUM Academics Share their Perspectives



**DR ABDUL WAHAB
ABDUL GHANI**
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
& LANGUAGES

“I believe learning would only be meaningful if comprehension and the ability to differentiate information and knowledge are sought as desirable outcomes. Learning needs to move beyond memorisation into the realm of reflection and even intuition. I believe deep learning is desirable at all levels and situations because, ultimately, human progress and wisdom depend on deep learning to be at their core.

Deep learning is not something new, nor is it foreign to us. At the very least, as educators, we need to be familiar with Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Domains, especially the demands emanating from the higher domains. When setting assessment questions that require analysis, synthesis and evaluation, we should do so based on the idea that learners need to be encouraged to think and reflect.

As tutors, we need to be aware of this dichotomy of the surface and the deep. We have to play our roles in facilitating and articulating this onward move beyond surface learning. We need to carefully plan and strategise tutorial sessions or online discussions, filling them with questions, tasks and cases that challenge learners to think, reflect and be engaged in deep learning. Of course, a necessary prerequisite to this quest is that, we ourselves must believe that our learners would welcome, or at least can be nudged into participating in such a venture. Our learners are here on their own accord and I believe most are highly motivated and eager to learn. Let us show them the way and blaze the trail for deep and meaningful learning.” **TCX**



DR NORA AHMAD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
SCHOOL OF NURSING &
ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

“Deep learning is central to nursing, as nursing by nature requires its practitioners to critically analyse new concepts and ideas and link them to their existing knowledge. Nursing learners would then need to apply these concepts and ideas to solve real life problems in the practical setting. Nursing as a hands-on profession also requires learners to work independently and to be able to identify knowledge gaps to fill in order to prevent errors in the medical practice and to improve the quality of patient care. For these reasons, deep learning is a must in any nursing programme.” **TCX**

PROMOTING DEEP LEARNING

Interview by Dr David CL Lim (david@oum.edu.my)
with AP Dr Arifin Haji Zainal, Dean of the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, OUM



Dr David: Please tell us something about your academic background and your experience so far as Dean of the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences (FASS), OUM.

Dr Arifin: I obtained my B.A. (Hons.) degree from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in 1976. After that, I immediately did my Master's and got a M.A in industrial and organizational psychology from Western Michigan University, USA, in 1978. Finally, in 1994 I received my PhD in the same field, from University of Wales, Swansea, UK.

I was with UKM from 1976 to 2010. I started as a tutor and ended my tenure as an associate professor. I held various administrative posts during my service at UKM, such as Deputy Director of UKM's Distance Learning Centre, Head of Programme, and Chair of the School of Psychology and Human Development.

I joined OUM in late 2010 as a contract associate professor and by January 2011, I was appointed as Dean of the FASS.

Dr David: What are the key programmes offered by the FASS and what new programmes will be offered in the near future?

Dr Arifin: Currently, the FASS offers seven programmes, i.e., Diploma in Islamic Studies with Education; Bachelor's degrees in Communication, Islamic Studies (Islamic Management), Political Science and Psychology, as well as Master's degrees in Islamic Studies (Islamic Management) and Counselling. Our future plan is to offer Bachelor's degrees in Malay Studies and Liberal Studies.

Dr David: Deep learning is something that is relevant to all disciplines. Still, do you think it is particularly crucial to the social sciences in contrast to other disciplines such as engineering and language? Why?

Dr Arifin: Yes, deep learning is relevant to all disciplines including the social sciences. It is important for learners in social sciences to apply deep learning in their work as well as in other areas. I believe it can do wonders to improve their skills and confidence.

Dr David: Can you give us an example or two on what might happen if and when a learner in the social sciences fails to actualize deep learning, and can only regurgitate bits of facts in the work context?

(Continued on next page)

“Learners need to put theory into practice. With deep learning, learners would be able to adjust and modify their knowledge according to what is appropriate for a specific environment.”

Dr Arifin: Those who fail to actualize deep learning will probably have difficulty in applying their knowledge. In other words, learners need to put theory into practice. With deep learning, learners would be able to adjust and modify their knowledge according to what is appropriate for a specific environment.

Dr David: How is the FASS actively promoting deep learning in the programmes it offers? What new plans can we look forward to from the FASS?

Dr Arifin: In my opinion, the role of promoting deep learning does not depend on the faculty alone. We rely on other departments and units at OUM, such as the Centre for Instructional Design and Technology (CIDT), the Institute of Teaching and Learning Advancement (ITLA) and the Institute of Quality, Research and Innovation (IQRI) to embed deep learning in the different components of our programmes. However, the FASS as the faculty will always strive to give our full co-operation and support to everyone at OUM to promote deep learning.

The FASS plans to organize road shows to meet current and potential learners. Also, the faculty plans to develop more Bachelor's degree programmes with different combinations of major and minor courses.

Dr David: What words of advice would you like to offer to tutors teaching courses from the FASS?

Dr Arifin: Tutors play a vital role in the ODL system. It is important for tutors to be committed in addition to having the right knowledge and experience. It would be beneficial to all if there were a stronger faculty-tutor relationship. **TCX**



THE FROG THAT DEFIED 'FATE'

A Sufi Tale on the Benefits of Turning a Deaf Ear to Words of Discouragement

A group of frogs were travelling through the woods, when two of them fell into a deep pit. All the other frogs gathered around and when they saw how deep the pit was, the frogs told their two unfortunate companions that it was hopeless and that they would never get out. Ignoring their comments and unwilling to accept this terrible fate, the two tried to jump up out of the pit.

The other frogs continued to shout into the pit that it was hopeless, and that they were as good as dead. Finally, having grown spent and weary, one of the frogs took heed to their calls. He quietly accepted his fate, laid down at the bottom of the pit and died as the others looked on in helpless grief.

The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could, although his body was wracked with pain and he was completely exhausted. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to simply accept his fate. Nevertheless, the frog jumped even harder and finally, wonder of wonders, leapt so high that he sprang from the pit.

When he got out, the other frogs asked him, "Why did you continue jumping? Didn't you hear us?"

Reading their lips, the astonished frog explained that he was deaf. He thought they were cheering him on the entire time. Thus, what he had perceived as encouragement inspired him to try harder and to succeed against all odds.

It is sometimes hard to understand that an encouraging word can go a long way. Anyone can speak negative words to rob another of the spirit to persevere in difficult times.

Special is the individual who will take the time to encourage another. TCX



“An encouraging word can go such a long way. Anyone can speak negative words to rob another of the spirit to persevere in difficult times.”



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