

## Higher Education and Adult Motivation: The case of UiTM Pahang's E-PJJ Students

*Mohd Samsuri Ghazali  
Mohd Faizal Azrol Azuan  
Sharifah Shatrah Syed Hamid  
Mohd Elfee Ab Rashid*

### ABSTRACT

*Although the traditional-aged college student may still be the most visible on campus, adult students are becoming the new majority in the student body. The adult student may fulfill many different roles and is now taking on the additional role of a student. Many of these adults also have the responsibility of children and jobs. The purpose of this study was to explore the motivating factors that lead Pahang workers to pursue higher education. This research was conducted using 60 students of E-PJJ Pahang Campus and the data were collected using a survey instrument that measures the extent to which various factors influenced one's motivation to pursue higher education. Analysis of the data revealed that overall the most important factor rated was "to career enhancement".*

**Key Words:** *Adult student, motivation factors, higher education*

### Introduction

Nowadays, the importance of having higher degree education in working sector required an individual to further study to the higher level. A significant number of adults, age 25 and older, are looking at their options in higher education and an increasing number are making the decision to go back to school (Guidos & Dooris, 2008; Mbilinyi, 2006; Sissel, Hansman, & Kasworm, 2001). The emergence of the knowledge society, rapid introduction of new technology and the changing work place increases the importance of adult learning. Adult students differ from younger students in another important aspect, what Sheehy (1976) described as "marker experiences" (e.g. marriage, divorce, getting a job, changing careers, etc.).

### Background of Study

In Malaysia, adult education is growing at a fast phase with the introduction of several online and distance education programs and also universities such as Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Open University of Malaysia (OUM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and so on. Adult education is the practice of learning, teaching and educating adults, which often happens through extension or continuing education.

At UiTM, the special institution that manages the online and distance education is Institut Pendidikan Neo (INED). INED was established in September 2001 manage four (4) simultaneous learning program which are Distance Learning (PJJ), Joint Education, Continuing Education and Off-Campus Studies (PLK). Currently there are 29 PLK programs offered by 14 faculties in UiTM Shah Alam and 10 branch campuses. The total student population is almost 5,000.

In Pahang, INED has been operating in the Kuantan Campus. Today, there are four programs offered by INED Pahang Campus which are Diploma in Public Administration (AM110, 140 students), Bachelor of Corporate Administration (AM225, 23 students), Degree in Accounting (AC220, 20 students) and Graduate School Education (ED231, 120 students). This study focused on students taking AM110 where a total of 60 students were randomly selected to answer the questions that have been provided.

## Purpose of study

The purpose of this study was to see the dominant motivation factor that cause adult learner to go for higher level education. This study focused on a specific group of adult learners that taking the Diploma in Public Administration at UiTM Kuantan as a sample. The outcome from the study is useful to students, academicians and university administrators alike. For the students, this research may help them to find the factors that can motivate them, academicians can tailor the learning process to cater the students' needs and behavior, while university administrators can find ways to market their programs and retain students.

## Research Question

Adult learners are typically defined as learners over the age of 25, and are often referred to as nontraditional students. Yet for almost two decades, adult learners have comprised close to 40 percent of the college-going population, spanning a range of backgrounds and experiences. This paper was trying to investigate the main motivation factors that influence adult learner to further their study.

## Literature Review

Motivation is an internal force that energizes the individual for action and determines the direction of that action. Motivation may be rooted in a basic impulse to optimize well-being, minimize physical pain and maximize pleasure.

Most educators and psychologists describe motivation as those processes that can arouse and bring about behavior, give direction and purpose to behavior, allow behavior to continue, and lead to choosing or preferring a particular behavior. Motivation is an internal force that leads to action and determines the direction of that action (Hunter, 1967; Russell, 1971).

Law et al. (2009) described motivation in learning as the desire to use knowledge and skills in associated learning activities. Motivation is a basic requirement of learning and that it requires effort. Law et al. (2009) supported this by stating that the aim of every learning oriented activity is to explore the factors that enable and motivate individuals to learn.

A growing number of positions require high skills and the prospects become dimmer for people who have not acquired a degree if they are aiming for responsible positions (Lyman, 1999; Teichler, 1996). Some students may pursue an advanced degree due to their desire for lifelong education (Helmfrid, 1996).

Lieb (1991) cited six factors serve as sources of motivation for adult learning:

- i. Social relationships: to make new friends, to meet a need for associations and friendships.
- ii. External expectations: to comply with instructions from someone else; to fulfill the expectations or recommendations of someone with formal authority.
- iii. Social welfare: to improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work.
- iv. Personal advancement: to achieve higher status in a job, secure professional advancement, and stay abreast of competitors.
- v. Escape/Stimulation: to relieve boredom, provide a break in the routine of home or work, and provide a contrast to other exacting details of life.
- vi. Cognitive interest: to learn for the sake of learning, seek knowledge for its own sake, and to satisfy an inquiring mind.

While, Boshier and Collins (1985) suggested that a six-factor model was the most theoretically and psychometrically defensible in understanding the need for adults to become involved in any adult learning programs. According to them, the adult learners were deemed to enroll or participate because of a need for:

- i. Social contact: these adults want to make and consolidate friendships, to be accepted by others, to gain insight into personal problems, to improve relationships and their social position. They

- participate because of their need for group activities and congenial friendships.
- ii. Social stimulation: Adults want to get relief from boredom, to overcome the frustration of day-to-day living, to escape intellectual narrowness, and to have a few hours away from other responsibilities. The essence of the factor is the use of adult education as an escape from boredom or frustration.
  - iii. Professional advancement: Adults want to secure professional advancement, achieve higher status in their job, or gain knowledge that will help in other courses. They are primarily job oriented.
  - iv. Community service: Adult learners want to become more effective citizens, to prepare for community service, to gain insight into human relationships, and to improve their ability to participate in any community work.
  - v. External expectations: The adults are complying with instructions laid down by someone else. They have enrolled on the recommendation of some authority such as an employer, a social worker, a friend, a religious leader or a counselor.
  - vi. Cognitive interest: Adults enjoy learning for its own sake. They merely want to “satisfy an enquiring mind” or “seek knowledge for its own sake”.

From the literature that have been review, there are three dominant motivation factors that encourage the student to go for higher education which is for career enhancement, gain knowledge and social interest.

## Research Methodology

### Population & Sample Size

Population refers to the entire group of people, events or things of interest that researcher wishes to investigate. The total populations of student under INED are 5000 students. The sample size of 60 respondents has been selected from the e-PJJ students in Kuantan Campus.

### Data Collection

This research employs the survey method for data collection by using questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed to students from different part/semester. Quantitative data from a survey questionnaire consisted of respondent's gender, age, marital status, employment sector, educational level and motivation factors to further their studies.

### Data Analysis

Once data are collected, the information will be coded in an appropriate data analytic technique that is being used to find the main motivation factors that influence adult learner to further their study. Thus, this research used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for data analysis. SPSS provided with a broad range of capabilities for the entire analytical process and it can generate decision making information quickly using powerful statistic.

### Findings and discussion

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender – Male	24	40
Female	36	60
Age - < 25	10	16.7
26 – 30	22	36.7

31 – 35	20	33.3
36 - 40	8	13.3
Marital Status – Single	35	58.3
Married	24	40
Others	1	1.7
Employment Sector – Government	48	80
Private	12	20

From the above data, 24 respondents were males (40 %) and 36 females (60%). The majority of respondents belonged to the group 24-30 years old (50 %), followed by the group 31-35 years (33.33 %) and those of 36 years and over (13.33 %). More than half of respondents were married (58.33 %) and the others single (40 %) and divorced (1.67 %) At the time of the survey, the student employment sector consist of government workers 80% and private workers 20%.

### Motivation towards Education Learning

Table 2.0: Motivation factors for Further Study

Reason for Further Study	Frequency	Percent (%)
Career Enhancement	34	56.67
Gain Knowledge	17	28.33
Social Interest	3	5.00
Others	6	10.00
Total	60	100.00

Adult motivation for learning is linked to reasons, the perception of the contribution/benefits and the satisfaction obtained through learning. In the questionnaire, we identify the reasons and the intention to pursue further learning. Respondents stated the main reasons for attending higher education learning were for career enhancement (56.67%). Secondary reasons pointed out by the group concerned is to gain knowledge (28.33 %) and 15 % were for social interest and other reasons for attending this course.

### Conclusion

Looking at the current situation where adult returning to university to take a variety of course either diploma or degree, understanding the reasons that can drive adults towards learning is very important. Results of this research highlights that main reason motivate adult for higher education learning is for career enhancement. This is because most of the students are those from the ranks of government lower level supporting staffs. With a diploma, opportunity for higher promotion is bigger. In addition, a flexible classroom and few meeting (five times a semester) has attracted students to go for higher education learning programmed offered by INED.

### Bibliography

- Boshier, R., and Collins, J. B. (1985). The Houle Typology After Twenty-Two Years: A Large Scale Empirical Test. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 113-130. *International Education Studies* November, 2008. 109.
- Guidos, M., and Dooris, M. J. (2008). Correlates of adult learner degree completion in a research university. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 56(2), 45-51.

- Hunter, M. (1967) .Motivation Theory for Teachers. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Helmfrid, S. (1996). Who is going to study? In A. Burgen (Ed.), Goals and purposes of higher education in the 21st century. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Law, K. Sandnes, F.E. Jian, H., and Huang, Y. (2009) A comparative study of learning motivation among engineering students in South East Asia and beyond, *Research Express@NCKU*, 10(7), at <http://research.ncku.edu.tw/re/articles/e/20090918/1.html>
- Lieb, S. (1991). Principles of Adult Learning, This article can be found at URL: <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-2.htm>
- Lyman, B. (1999). Internet-based learning: What is in it for the adult learner? In D. French, C. Hale, C.
- Johanson., and G. Farr (Ed.), Internet-based learning – An introduction and framework for higher education and business. (pp. 25-46). New York: Kogan.
- Mbilinyi, L. (2006,). Degrees of opportunity. Retrieved from [http://www.degreesofopportunity.org/inc/degrees\\_opportunity\\_report.pdf](http://www.degreesofopportunity.org/inc/degrees_opportunity_report.pdf).
- Russell, I.L. (1971). Motivation. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company.
- Sissel, P. A., Hansman, C. A., and Kasworm. C. E. (2001). The politics of neglect: Adult learners in higher education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 91, 17-27.
- Sheehy, G.(1976).Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life. New York: Dutton.
- Teichler, U. (1996). Higher education and new socio-economic challenges in Europe. In A. Burgen (Ed.), Goals and purposes of higher education in the 21st century. London: Jessica Kingsley.

---

MOHD SAMSURI GHAZALI, MOHD FAIZAL AZROL AZUAN, SHARIFAH SHATRAH SYED  
HAMID, MOHD ELFEE AB RASHID.

Universiti Teknologi MARA (Pahang).

[mohdsamsuri@pahang.uitm.edu.my](mailto:mohdsamsuri@pahang.uitm.edu.my), [MohdFaizal@pahang.uitm.edu.my](mailto:MohdFaizal@pahang.uitm.edu.my), [shatrah@pahang.uitm.edu.my](mailto:shatrah@pahang.uitm.edu.my),  
[mohdelfee@pahang.uitm.edu.my](mailto:mohdelfee@pahang.uitm.edu.my).