IDE OF THE TABLE: LESSONS FROM THE
TOR-CUM-ADULT LEARNER

Assoc. Prof Abu Bakar Ibrahim, PhD
(abuba710@salam.uitm.edu.my)
Faizah Abd Majid, PhD
(faiza404@salam.uitm.edu.my)

Education Faculty,
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

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Abstract:
This paper addresses the issue on the changing management and leadership roles of the school administrators as they participate in a tertiary learning programme as adult learners. In the attempt to investigate the issue, a research using a self-developed questionnaire was distributed to a group of 36 headmasters/mistresses who were enrolled in a bachelor's degree programme in one of the local public universities. In specific, the investigation sought to discover the management and leadership challenges the respondents faced as adult learners participating in the tertiary learning programme on a modular basis. Additionally, their strategies in coping with the reported challenges were sought. It was anticipated that the findings would lead to a better understanding of the adult learners who play two distinguished roles concurrently. The added value of this investigation is seen from the potential of discovering the administrators' self- concept as both the administrator and adult learner. On top of that, it also uncovered the respondents' attitudes towards learning and their ability to adapt in a new environment which also comprised the traditional learners. The findings of the investigation brought about various implications on the training of school administrators and adult education since the findings could help to illuminate the pattern in the school administrator-cum-adult learner's educational management and leadership as they play the role of an administrator and adult learner.

Introduction
This paper addresses an issue that relates the adult learners. Of late, there is a growing number of this cohort of tertiary students. This scenario is an outcome of the k-economy and human capital investments driven by the Malaysian government. Much has yet to be learnt about the adult learners. Knowles (1990) in his book has addressed the adult learners as the ─neglected species Although it has been almost 20 decades, adult learners may still be the ─neglected species in this country now that the country is currently faced with the mushrooming of the adult learners. One area that could be of interest to many researchers is how to assist the adult learners in their learning process. The fact that the adult learners have a unique set of characteristics which mark their difference from the traditional college students has resulted in their unique set of learning needs (Knowles, 1990, Brookfield, 1997, Rogers, 2002).

that the adult learners may be wearing several hats at the course of their studies the adult learners may be holding managerial or administrative posts. This scenario may bring about debatable issues which in turn require attention. In line with the aspiration of the Ministry of Education, a group of adult learners who are headmasters and headmistresses has recently enrolled in a bachelor's programme at a local tertiary institution. The enrolment was one of the efforts taken by the ministry in upgrading the academic qualifications of experience leaders and administrators. It is very interesting to investigate potential issues on the changing management and leadership roles of the school administrators as they participate in a tertiary learning programme as adult learners. Hence, a research which focuses on this was carried out. It is the aim of this paper to report on the issues identified.

Literature Review
Adult learners
Adult learners are defined as students who have other social roles than that of a student (Knowles, 1990). In other words, they could be a spouse, a parent and an employee. They are perhaps significantly distinguished from other traditional college students by the following characteristics as claimed by Knowles (1990).
1) They have a self-concept that portrays them as autonomous and independent.
2) Their experience is a rich resource of information in their learning process.
3) They seek to learn something related to their work and plan to put the new knowledge to immediate use.

Linderman's assumptions on their orientation towards learning further differentiate them from the traditional college students. According to Linderman (in Knowles, 1990:31),
1. Adults are more motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy.
2. Adult's orientation to learning is life-centred.
3. Experience is the richest resource for adults' learning.
4. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.

In Malaysia, many of the adult learners could be identified across the training centres, universities and colleges in the nation. They could either be taking up distance programmes, off-campus programmes, in-service courses or any other vocational and technical programmes.

Three common characteristics of adult learners
Adult learners are believed to have distinguished characteristics making them uniquely different from other learners. Knowles (1990:236) has elaborated that the characteristics of adult learners can be understood by considering these three domains; their self-concept, experience and time perspective. Briefly, self-concept is the image people have of themselves. Knowles adds, "as people grow, their self- concept moves from being a dependent personality to a self-directing one." This in turn makes them become "autonomous". It is no doubt then why some educators believe that classes for adults should be learner-centered since the learners appreciate autonomy. It is even so when Knowles claims that "… no adult learner will learn under condition incongruent with his self-concept" (*ibid.*).

...wles (1990: 237) comments that adults have more ... them a õrich resource in the classroomö. This notion has been put forward earlier by Mocker (1980: 35) who claims that õí adults enter an educational activity with a greater amount of experience from which they can relate new experience.ö This further explains why there are suggestions for the classroom activities to be learner-oriented. In other words, most of the materials for the classes should be generated from the learners themselves. Work conferences, group discussions, seminars, student demonstrations and consultative supervisions are among the activities which are claimed to best suit the adult learnersø needs. However, one drawback is also inevitable due to the influence of the adult learnersø experience. It is said that with their experience, adult learners can form habits which may not be suitable or helpful in their learning process (Knowles, 1990: 237). For example, the fact that they are so used to teacher-centered classes, they may have difficulties coping in an -adult classø which as said, is -learner-centered.ø Other possible negative habits are õbiases, presuppositions that close oneøs mind to new, fresh ideasö (Knowles, 1990:59).

Finally, the characteristics of adult learners are also associated with õtime perspective.ö Mocker (1980: 35) has mentioned that õí adults enter (an educational activity) with more specific and immediate plans for applying newly acquired knowledge.ö Knowles (*ibid.*) further clarifies this idea by stating that due to the fact that adult learners need to be õequipped to overcome their current problems, they want to put to immediate use what they learn.ö In this instance, adult learners are perceived as motivated learners who are driven by intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic ones. As Knowles (*ibid.*) further elaborates, adult learners are õmostly motivated to learn because they are seeking solutions to the problems they encounter in their roles as parents, workers and so on.ö What can be safely deduced from this is that teachers of adult learners should be õpeople-centered than subject-matter-centeredö (Knowles, 1990:238).

At this point of the discussions, it is worth to note that all these merely serve as assumptions and the characteristics listed are said to be what are **commonly expected** of an adult.

Types of motivation

Motivation involves the processes that õenergize, direct, and sustain behaviourø (Santrock, 2004: 414). Basically, there are two types of motivation; extrinsic and intrinsic (Brown, 2001). While extrinsic refers to the external factors or rewards that promote studentsø learning, intrinsic refers to internal rewards such as self-fulfillment in accomplishing a task such as learning. It is believed that the latter type of motivation can sustain a longer period of time as compared to the first type. As a result, students who possess this kind of motivation may approach the learning tasks with lower anxiety and fewer -filterø

Additionally, intrinsic motivation could be categorized into two types namely the intrinsic motivation for self-determination and personal choice and the intrinsic motivation of optimal experience and flow (Santrock, 2004: 415). While the first refers to the reason behind oneøs action is their own will, the latter refers to the need to experience something meaningfully and challenging enough.

cognitive factors, as well as, behaviour are the core elements when it comes to learning. Simply, social factors would include studentsø observation of successful people around them such as their peers, teachers, siblings and parents. Cognitive factors on the other hand refer to the studentsø expectations for success. Examples of the factors are beliefs, attitudes, strategies, thinking and intelligence. These two factors in turn would determine the studentsø behaviour in learning (Santrock, 2004: 226). Additionally, the studentsø behaviour may also influence the social and cognitive factors, as the social and cognitive factors may influence each other. Bandura (1986) posits that these three factors are inter-related and suggested the ÷Reciprocal Determinism Model of Learningø

The Study
A preliminary study was carried with the main purpose of finding out why and how administrators who are adult learners, cope with their degree level study at a local institution of higher learning. Findings from this study would provide valuable information to institutions of higher learning offering similar degree program as well as to the sponsors of these adult learners in determing accountability. Specificialy, this study would provide invaluable lesson about this group of administrators-cum adult learners.

Instrument
The study adopted the qualitative research design. A self-developed questionnaire which consisted of 6 open-ended questions was distributed to a group of 36 school headmasters and headmistresses. Each open-ended question represents the various constructs which were earlier identified based on the literature review. The following are the identified constructs.
1) Reasons/Motives to learning
2) Expectations
3) Coping strategies
4) Adaptation
5) Opinions on the benefits, programme structure and others
6) Suggestions

Analysis
Since the data collected was in the form of short answers, it was analyzed thematically. Excerpts in the form of short phrases or sentences from the short answers were first extracted. The excerpts were then studied carefully and the themes and codes were determined. Following this, the codes were transferred to a tree diagram to allow clearer picture of the connections between the themes and sub-themes. It is from this tree diagram that the research findings could be found and further discussions on the implications could be generated.

...isted of 36 cohort 2 adult learners who are currently pursuing their Bachelors in Education degree majoring in Educational Management at an institution of higher learning in Selangor. During the conduct of the study, the subjects were in their second phase of their bachelor's programme which consisted of 12 phases all together. Each phase is 5 weeks and exposes the subjects to 4 courses. The breakdown of the respondents is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 : Respondents

Position	Years in service			Total	
	0 – 4	5 - 9	10 on more	No.	%
Headmaster	8	14	3	25	69
Administrator at MOE	6			6	17
Administrator at JPN			2	2	6
Administrator at PPD	2		1	3	8
Total				36	100

All respondents are from the state of Selangor, specifically the Klang Valley area, except four who are from the state of Kelantan, Terengganu, Penang and Malacca.

The group consists of 25 or 69% headmaster, 6 or 17% administrator at the Ministry of Education, 2 or 6% officer form JPN (Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri) or State Education Department and 3 or 8% from PPD (Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah) or District Education Department. The distribution between males and females is rather interesting where only 10 or 28% were males and 26 or 72% were females.

The Findings
Question 1: Reasons/Motives to Learning
Responses relating to reasons or motives to learning were categorized into two, that is Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation. It would be interesting to find out the reasons or motives of the respondents in joining the program. For example, Knowles (1990) states that adult learners are intrinsically motivated while a study done by Abu Bakar et al (1999) to a group of adult learners indicated that they were extrinsically motivated, namely for social mobility.

Based on the information gathered, eight reasons were categorized as intrinsic motivation while three were categorized as extrinsic motivation as presented in Table 1. It can be concluded that respondents reasons or motives were more intrinsic than extrinsic.

Reasons / Motives to Learning

INTRINIC MOTIVATION		EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION	
Details	f	Details	f
• Improve professional competent	28	Increase in salary as a degree holder from DG34 to DG41	5
• Increase knowledge/academic qualification	18	Improve social status	4
• Keep abreast with development in education	15	Encouragement from friends or family members	4
• Ambition to get a degree	13		
• Take the opportunity given by the Ministry of Education	12		
• Accept government's challenge to be produce effective administrators	11		
• Role model to family members and subordinates	9		
• Felt challenged as subordinates have degree or are pursuing degree program	5		

Question 2: Expectations

All respondents were very positive and indicated that they have made the right decision to pursue the degree program. Although they are now at the second phase, they find that the knowledge and experience gained has helped them to be more confident in carrying out their duties as administrators. In addition, with the support from lecturers, colleagues, friends and family members, they now felt that they are confident to complete the program successfully.

Question 3: Coping Strategies

Strategies adopted by these adult learners can be summed up as in Table 3.
Based on the responses tabulated, it can be concluded that respondents are mature, well organized and well prepared in performing their dual roles as administrators and students.

3: Strategies Adopted

As Administrators	As Students
1) Delegate duties and responsibilities to assistants, subordinates or peers.	1) Observe rules and regulations as students.
2) Have meeting or briefing session with staff before each session so that each one of them carry out their assigned duties while the administrator is away on study leave.	2) Manage time properly, especially in completing assignments. 3) Adhere to schedule given.
3) Heve a yearly planer or schedule of activities so that they are carried out accordingly	4) Work in groups and provide support to each other
4) Communicate through e-mail, phone or sms, whenever necessary.	5) Maintain good health.

Question 4:   Adaptation

Responses indicated that they have learnt to adopt and adopt to the various changes in the surroundings and learning environment.

A large number of them indicated that they have to be clear with their roles, that is, to think and behave as a student and adult learner rather than an administrator.

The daily interaction as a student and adult learner has helped them to reflect on human relationship and personal values especially the sprint of give and take.

They have formed groups in order to review the lessons, to complete their assignments and to prepare for class by sharing information from books, journals and the internet.

Generally, the respondents indicated that they have no problem adjusting to the new environment and to play the role as an adult learner.

Question 5: Opinion on the Program

Respondent were required to give their opinion on the benefits they acquire from the program as well as their views on the program structure.

Feedback from the respondents indicated that they have acquired more knowledge and experience that could help them in performing their roles more effectively and efficiently.

re carried at their work place are empowering and
subordinates or peers.

With regards to the program, majority of the agreed with the structure of the program which is divided into 12 phrases of 5-week each. They find it convenient and does not disrupt or jeopardize their responsibility as an administrator.

Question 6: Suggestions to Improve the Program

Respondents indicated the need for the lecturers to spend more time in order to have an open discussion on different aspects of education and leadership.

As the medium of instruction at this institution is in English, majority of the respondents suggested that more subjects, courses or activities be offered in order to improve their English proficiency in addition to the two English subjects i.e. Report Writing and Meetings, and the English Enrichment Program offered in phase 1 and 2. Some of the suggestions given were public speaking, debates and visits to other organizations.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can ask the same question again, that is, what lessons have we learn form the administrator-cum-adult learners?

Firstly, data gathered from the study shows that administrators are keen to learn and to gain knowledge, both academically and professionally, if they are given the opportunity.

Secondly, they did not require reward or any other form of extrinsic motivation to study as data gathered showed that they are motivated to learn because they feel the need to learn and to improve themselves. This supports Knowles (1990) view that adults are intrinsically motivated to learn.

Thirdly, this study also support Knowles (1990) that adults are self-directed and are independent learners. Results of the study shows that the respondents voluntarily choose to accept the offer made by the Ministry of Education to pursue the three-year Bachelors degree in Educational Management program although they are currently holding the position of headmasters or officers at the Ministry, State or District level. They also indicated that they know how to divide their time between professional duties and academic requirement as an adult learner.

Fourthly, they portrayed that they are responsible individuals, both to their profession and family. Responsibility to their profession are shown for example from their willingness to gain knowledge so that they can be better educational leaders as well as their ability to provide support to their family and assign responsibilities to their family members while they are away on study leave.

administrators cum adult learners are willing to seek ... their friends or coursemates and at the same time share work-related knowledge and experiences with them. This supports Knowles (1990) theory that adult learners come with a wealth of experience and are willing to share their experiences.

Implications for Further Research

This study involves 36 respondents from one institution of higher learning in the state of Selangor. A more comprehensive study involving the same category of adult learners currently enrolled in all the eleven institutions of higher learning in Malaysia would provide a more valuable information regarding this group of adult learners.

The finding of this study also shows that administors are willing to learn and increase their knowledge both academically and professionally, in order to prepare themselves to be effective educational leaders. Research need to be carried out to determine other areas of training that could be provided to administrators as the majority of them are instrinsically motivated to learn. This would result in a more effective and efficient administration of the schools in the country.

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