LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF OUM VIDEO LECTURES

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ABSTRACT

Leveraging on information and communication technology (ICT) has enabled education providers to come up with creative ways of engaging with learners. As a result, learners are constantly being exposed to new ways of learning and collaborating with their peers. Also, accessibility to affordable smart devices with fast connections has only intensified the integration of technology into the education sphere. Open University Malaysia (OUM) has long recognised this trend and has been actively developing various tools to deliver its learning materials through the online model. One such tool is its online video lectures. This paper describes an exploratory study of OUM learners' perception of video lectures for certain courses in their studies. The study is based on a survey questionnaire to determine learners' expectations and preferences for the video lectures used in OUM and also on what other additional features, if any, should be included. The motivation of this research is to help the institution make an informed decision on the future development of video lectures based on the feedback of learners so that they are aligned with the expectations of OUM learners.

Keywords: *Online Video Lecture, Technology-Assisted Learning, Open and Distance Learning*

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades have witnessed an upheaval in online education. This upheaval has been largely driven by technological and pedagogical trends, greater access to the Internet globally, an explosion of mobile phone users, and the appreciation for these technologies by young people, as well as by educators. (Siemens, Gašević, & Dawson, 2015). It is arguable that today's adult learner who is technologically more savvy than his/her predecessor two decades ago demand a variety of learning resources besides the print module, long considered the staple among ODL providers. Some of these resources include, audio clips, TV and radio broadcasts, computer-assisted learning and open educational resources (OER).

As a result, ODL providers are evolving to remain relevant by embracing technology to meet the expectations of its learners. Thus, the infusion of technology in the development of ODL learning resources is the mantra. Moreover, leveraging on technology has also allowed ODL providers to come up with a repertoire of learning resources to better accommodate the diverse needs of its learners. This is a blessing for the adult learner; research has shown that they allow for flexible and active learning, where learners can learn curriculum content at their own convenience and preferred pace (Cardall, Krupat & Ulrich, 2008; Maxwell & Mucklow, 2012; Zhang, Zhou, Briggs & Nunamaker, 2006). Besides, by catering to the different needs ensures that no learner will be left behind due to his or her preferred pace for learning.

This phenomenon is not lost on the policy makers at OUM. To date, OUM has already developed 293 video lectures spanning various academic disciplines from nursing to business and management to social science to education and languages to science and technology. These video lectures were produced by Subject Matter Experts working in tandem with the Centre for Instructional Design and Technology (CiDT). Besides video lectures, OUM had also created other learning resources like the HTML module, learning segments, learning capsules and audio books. Currently, the video lectures play a supplementary role to the PDF modules, the backbone of its learning resource, which drives the pedagogy at the university. Also, at present there is an e-learning initiative in the pipeline to offer certain programmes on a fully online mode, where video lectures may have a more prominent role to play.

Thus, the main objective of this exploratory study was to gather learners' perception on video lectures that have been developed in OUM. Towards this end, we were particularly interested in gathering information in the following five areas: learners preferred device in viewing video lectures, how often learners viewed them and at what point in the semester, why they watched them and what additional features learners wanted to see more of in future video lectures. We also sought to elicit their suggestions and feedback on what additional features could be included for future video lecture development. It is hoped that the findings of this exploratory research will help the institution make an informed decision on the future development of video lectures so that they are aligned with the expectations of OUM learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One learning resource that has grown, exponentially, in popularity and already exists on many different platforms is the video lecture. It is intriguing to note how video usage predominates the Internet bandwidth in daily life. According to Cisco, "Globally, the total Internet video traffic (business and consumer, combined) will be 77% of all Internet traffic in 2019, up from 59% in 2014" (CISCO, 2017). While it took six minutes to download a YouTube video in 2005, it only takes a fraction of that time to stream it on our smart devices today! If these statistics are anything to go by, then video lectures appear very well placed to be a major game changer in enriching the quality of the learning experience in ODL.

Moss (1983) contends that video is different from other learning technologies, because it offers the benefit of using the visual perception, "that powerful but neglected sense" in new ways. On the other hand, Goodyear and Steeples (1998) argue that video can present in a clear and striking manner descriptions to articulate tacit information and knowledge hard to describe through text. Moreover, videos have gained considerable traction among education providers not only as supplemental material to the staple face-to-face instruction offered but also as a vital component of online courses and they are considered as a powerful communication and instructional tool (Moridani, 2007; Nikzad, Azari, Mahgoli & Akhoundi, 2012; Ramlogan, Raman, & Sweet, 2014). A recent study has also concluded that learners' satisfaction with video lectures has a strong correlation with positive overall learning experience and the perception of impact of videos on learning (Scagnoli et al., 2017).

Thanks to better and faster Internet connectivity, video lectures can be accessed more easily, faster and across multiple platforms and devices. It can also be viewed anytime and anywhere; and stopped and replayed as many times as needed. Within higher education, the increasing prevalence of technology is driving the viability and availability of online teaching and the open academic resources, and video is playing a role in facilitating these developments (Bates, 2015; Greenberg & Zanetis, 2012).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

For this exploratory study, a mixed method approach was used to collect data through an online questionnaire. The self-administered questionnaire was designed using Google Docs and uploaded onto OUM's learning platform known as myINSPIRE. Our reason for using Google Docs was for its built-in tools that allows for the easy organisation and conversion of data to graphs that makes the analysis of data that much easier. These questions were either multiple choice (encompassing the 5 areas of interest mentioned earlier) or open ended questions (to elicit feedback and suggestions for future video lecture development). The respondents were learners from OUM learning centres throughout the country. The questionnaire was uploaded into myINSPIRE on 8January and collected on 23 January 2019. A total of 77 respondents completed and submitted the questionnaire for this study. The respondents were from various programmes and clusters and they were requested to fill up the online questionnaire during their leisure.

The results from the questionnaire are discussed in the next section.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. How do you access our video lectures?

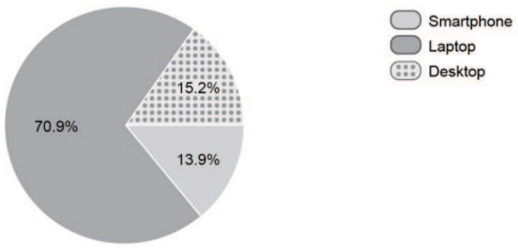

Figure 1: Responses to the Question "How Do You Access Our Video Lectures?"

The data in Figure 1 suggest that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (70.9%) prefer to access their video lectures on their laptops. After all, laptops are ubiquitous today in Malaysia among learners for the technological tools that they offer combined with their portability. So, it should not come as a surprise that most of the respondents access video lectures on their laptops. On the other hand, the remaining respondents were nearly split in their choice of watching the video lectures on their desktop or smartphones. The low preference in watching video lectures on smartphones is worth noting. There can be a couple of reasons for this: the respondents are unaware that video lectures can just as easily be downloaded and accessed through their smartphones, or secondly they do not consider this device as a "learning" tool. Or perhaps the limited screen size of the smartphones makes them an unattractive proposition for viewing video lectures. It appears that the "visual aesthetics" of video lectures combined with audio can best be enjoyed on a larger screen. Hence, the popularity of the laptop as the device for watching video lectures among the respondents.

2. How often do you watch our video lectures per semester?

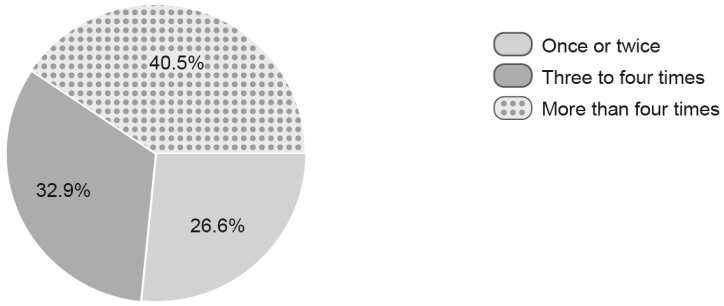

Figure 2: Responses to the Question "How Often Do You Watch the Video Lectures Per Semester?"

Based on Figure 2, a majority of the respondents have watched video lectures more than four times at 40.5%, while almost a third of the respondents have viewed the video lectures 3 to 4 times per semester. On the other hand, about 27% viewed them only once or twice per semester. This indicates that the video lectures have a high viewing frequency with almost 75% of the respondents viewing the videos at least three times per semester.

3. At what point did you start watching the video lectures?

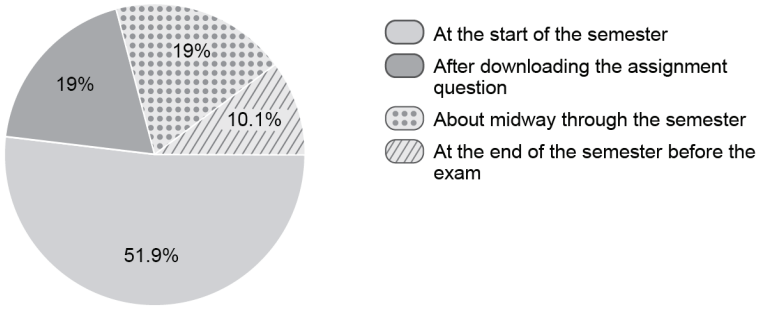

Figure3: Responses to the Question "At What Point Did You Start Watching the Video Lectures?"

Figure 3indicates that about 52% of the respondents viewed video lectures at the start of the semester. This means that most learners are aware of the availability of this supplementary learning tool at the point of registering for the semester and are eager to refer to it, probably to get an overview of the course content that they have enrolled for before attending the F2F tutorial. Meanwhile a smaller percentage of learners at 19% watched the video lectures either after downloading the assignment question or midway through the semester. Only 10% viewed the videos at the end of the semester, prior to taking their exams.

4. Which best describes why you watch the video lectures?

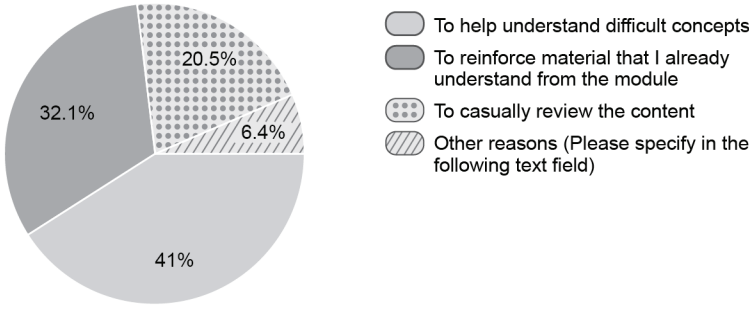

Figure4: Responses to the Question "Which Best Describes Why You Watch the Video Lectures?"

Figure4suggests that 41% of the respondents watched the video lectures to help understand difficult concepts. This could indicate that video lectures may be helping respondents in the understanding of difficult concepts by providing them with better concept clarity, as these can be more efficiently visualised and explained in detail as opposed to reading the module. For example, in a video lecture it is very common to present concepts in a video lecture with the presenter simultaneously expounding therein. On the other hand, 32% of the respondents used the video lectures to reinforce material that they already understood from the module.

In other words, the video lectures appear to be having some impact in supplementing the e-module by helping elucidate difficult concepts and reinforcing understanding of the content in the module. By contrast, close to 21% considers it as a way to casually review the content.

About 6% of the respondents gave other reasons such as tohelp highlight assignment key points, preview a topic before reading it in detail, gain a basic idea of the topic before reading the module; and the retention of facts.

5. What features would you like to see more of in the video lectures in the future? Additional features in the video lectures:

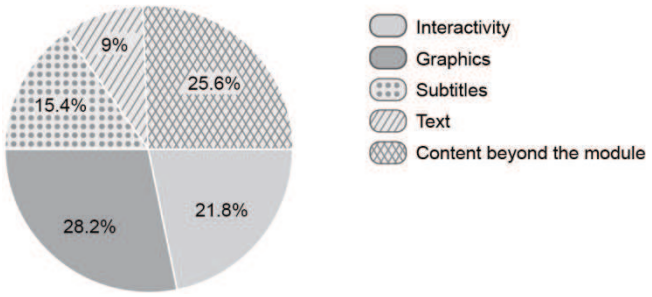

Figure5: Responses to the Question "What Features Would You Like to See More of in the Video Lectures in the Future?"

The top three features which the respondents want to see more of in video lectures (as shown in Figure 5) are graphics, interactivity and content beyond module. These are basically the main features which can enhance the videos further and make them more interesting as a learning supplement to the pdf module. Interactivity maybe a useful feature that can be added to future video lectures. With regard to the content in the video lecture going beyond the module, this may require further discussion among the academics in the cluster and CiDT.

6. Suggestions to improve future video lectures.

The respondents had also provided feedback and suggestions for further improvement which can be broadly categorised into two areas, namely on the presenters' style of delivering video lectures and additional features to be included in future video lectures.

From the aspect of delivery of video lectures, some respondents suggested the need for presenters to improve their presentation skills and the comments are as follows:

- *"Lecturers need to be trained as professional speakers in order to conduct lectures lively and interesting."*
- *"Some video lecturers tend to repeat whatever is on the screen."*
- *"Keep the video lectures interesting by improving the way how it is delivered, sometimes, they're too rigid."*

Respondents also feel that presenters should avoid dialects and provide more explanation of the content as reflected in the following comments:

- "*Some of video, the lecturer is using "kampung English". Sound like some "state language" which make me confusing (sic).*"
- *"Video lecture should be more elaborated than the current one."*
- *"I hope the lecturers could give more explanations in their own words instead of just reading out the learning outcomes from the modules. It would be nice for the students to feel like attending lectures face to face. The lecturers could bring out some of the common problems that the students may have to deal with in our course of study".*

Moreover, in terms of additional features, a few of the respondents would like to see mind-maps, Malay subtitles and transcripts, and interactivity included in future video lectures, as shown in the following comments:

- "*Use more graphics*."
- "*Subtitles or transcripts of the video would be useful for us….*"
- "*Use a lot of graphic and mind mapping*."
- "*Create an interactive and creative lecture*"

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The research findings from this exploratory study have provided some useful preliminary insights on OUM learners' perception towards video lectures. It can be concluded from this study that the majority of the respondents accessed video lectures through laptops, viewed video lectures at the beginning of the semester and watched video lectures primarily to understand difficult topics. Also, the respondents would like to see more graphics included in future video lectures.

One implication of this study is that all video lectures should be uploaded before the start of the semester to give learners a chance of viewing them upon registering for the semester. Another would be to consider developing video lectures for certain courses that focus solely on the more difficult areas in the module. Interactive features should be added to enhance video lectures and these could include learning aids like mind-maps and sub-titles. In order to improve presenters' skills to capture learners' attention, tips on effective presentation skills could be included in future video lecture workshops.

The feedback provided in this survey will be seriously considered in the development of future video lectures so that they are aligned with the expectations of OUM learners, further enriching the learning experience.

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