

# The Research Framework: Relationship between Characteristic of Lifelong Learning and Preferences of Heutagogy Activities among Students in a Public University in Malaysia

Irmohizam Ibrahim, Norhasni Zainal Abiddin and Ahmad  
Mujahid Ahmad Zaidi

Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: Norhasni Zainal Abiddin

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## Abstract

The importance of lifelong learning in education has been mentioned in several policies in Malaysia including the Blueprint on Enculturation of Lifelong Learning for Malaysia 2011-2020, Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) and the government has allocated quite a budget to support this lifelong learning in education system. Studies regarding lifelong learning in education system had indicated several issues including lack of lifelong learning implementation, low usage of teaching approach towards lifelong learning and lack in skills related to lifelong learning. Meanwhile, in facing 21<sup>st</sup> Century education, issues related to self-determined learning or heutagogy also has been identified. This includes students lack of readiness to be autonomous. It is belief that, self-determined learning able to boost the implementation of lifelong learning concept among students. Lack of knowledge and information on this learning approach may affect the aim in implementing lifelong learning among the students. This article provides research framework on the relationship between characteristic of lifelong learning and preferences of heutagogy activities among students. A quantitative survey research method will be use in this study and the data will be analyzed using descriptive analysis and inference analysis. It will be conducted in order to have better understanding on the current situation, which may facilitate the objectives of lifelong learning as proposed in the mentioned policies.

**Keywords:** Lifelong Learning, Self-determine Learning, Heutagogy, Higher Learning Institution

## Introduction

The Malaysian government has emphasised the concept of lifelong learning by developing an lifelong learning blueprint, which defines lifelong learning as the development of human potential through an ongoing supportive process that stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all of the knowledge, values, skills, and understandings they need throughout their

lives and apply them with confidence, creativity, and excitement in all roles, situations, and environments" based on national needs (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011). Until the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan, the relevant elements of lifelong learning are still emphasized through the provision of manpower through training. The education sector has also been supported to provide skills training through the development of training institutions that provide training to students as well as the community (Government of Malaysia, 2021). The need for quality manpower training promotes lifelong learning as a continuous learning process, and since technology development is an ever-changing environment, learning to cope with it should be a never-ending process as well.

The concept of self-determine learning is appropriate when it comes to lifelong learning. This concept, also known as heutagogy, is a student-centered learning approach that encourages students to determine their own learning process while teachers serve as coaches or leaders to aid the process. Given the importance of autonomy and self-directed learning to the concept of self-determined learning, it's no surprise that those interested in lifelong learning have eagerly linked the two. Therefore, it is liable to mention that lifelong learners are self-determined learners (Hase, 2016). Heutagogy offers a variety of benefits to today's learners, in particular the way in which the approach gives them a learner-centered environment that supports them in defining an own learning path (Blaschke & Hase, 2015). In short, heutagogy is a powerful strategy based on self-determined and self-directed learning, providing students with the tools for life-long learning and growth in a highly autonomous manner. This approach has become more relevant in a pandemic and post-pandemic situation, with distance education being enabled by emerging technologies. In essence, heutagogical practice is a way to better prepare students for the new-age workplace and acclimatize to the demands of a global knowledge economy, the fast-changing nature of jobs, and the frequent need to upskill, reskill, and multi-skill.

The industrial sector in Malaysia is getting bigger each day, includes the services sector. Despite global economic uncertainties and challenges, the government remains committed to ensuring the country's economic growth. The education sector has provided training of human resources to be involved in this sector. This course aims to teach students critical decision-making skills so that they can successfully strategize business operations. It provides students with a fundamental and clear understanding of the functions of every division in a company, including marketing, finance, operations, human resources, and office management. The goal of producing quality graduates from this education course will also contribute to the development of the service sector by providing high-performing workers to the sector (Abiddin, 2013).

Meanwhile, studies regarding lifelong learning in education system had indicated several issues. Firstly, lack of implementation of lifelong learning including level of student readiness (Ahmad & Abdul Ghapar, 2019; Ghazalan et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019) and low usage of teaching approach towards lifelong learning (Saman et al., 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2016). Secondly, lack in skills related to lifelong learning (Anthonysamy, 2020; Sidhu et al., 2016; Williams, 2021). The same issues were also reported from the industrial side whereby students were reported lacking in the Lifelong Learning skills (Ghani & Mara, 2018; Rafiq et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2020). The importance of lifelong learning in education has been mentioned in several policies in Malaysia including the Blueprint on Enculturation of Lifelong

Learning for Malaysia 2011-2020 (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011), Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2015) and the government has allocated quite a budget to support this lifelong learning in education system. Meanwhile, in facing 21<sup>st</sup> Century education, issues related to self-determined learning or heutagogy also has been identified. This includes students lack of readiness to be autonomous (Blaschke, 2012). It is belief that, self-determined learning able to boost the implementation of lifelong learning concept among student. With lack of knowledge and information on this learning approach may affect the aim of implementing lifelong learning among the students. Thus, this research will be conducted to identify the relationship between heutagogy preferences and lifelong learning in order to have better understanding on the current situation which may facilitate the objectives of lifelong learning as proposed in the mentioned policies.

### **Lifelong Learning**

The concept of lifelong learning refers to a set of values and principles that govern the role of continuous acquisition, integration, and application of new knowledge throughout one's lifetime, as well as the practises and structures that enable professionals to remain relevant, effective, and engaged in their work" (Nissen et al., 2014). The term "lifelong learning" has become so common in education that it has become a cliché or a catchphrase that can be interpreted in any way the user wants. Some educators have embraced the concept of continuous learning to argue against the need for ongoing training and courses after formal education (in school and college) has ended. Many people, however, do not believe that lifelong learning necessitates lifelong schooling. Lifelong learning can be classified into four distinct categories;

- i) Formal learning (activities that take place in formal educational institutions and lead to accreditation or certification)
- ii) Non-formal learning (learning that occurs outside of a formal educational setting and does not always result in a specific qualification)
- iii) Individuals participating in activities to gain new skills or knowledge in specific areas related to their work or personal growth (exam private tutorials, technical courses, extension education, job-related training, community-based programmes, and other learning activities organised by public, private, or non-governmental organisations)
- iv) Informal learning that comprises of generally unstructured learning activities that individuals undertake to fulfil the need for knowing about certain things.

According to the Malaysia Strategy Blueprint Document on Enculturation of Lifelong Learning for Malaysia 2011-2020, lifelong learning is the acquisition and updating of all minds of abilities, interests, knowledge, and certifications from pre-school to post-retirement. It encourages people to obtain information and skills that will help them to adapt to a knowledge-based society and actively participate in all aspects of social and economic life, giving them more control over their destiny. It's also about appreciating all types of learning, including formal and non-formal education. Meanwhile, Love (2011) identified eight criteria of lifelong learning in his study, which specifies the precise characteristics that lifelong learners should possess. It outlines the skills that the faculty believes lead to the development of lifelong learner characteristics, as well as how these skills were included into the curriculum. It also said that the terms "lifelong learning" and "continuous education" have been used interchangeably.

### ***Self-Determined Learning***

Self-determined learning is a method of learning in which a student takes charge of his or her own learning objectives and methods in order to achieve personal goals or meet the perceived needs of their particular situation. The fact that a learner's learning means and objectives are very distinctive and differ depending on their life situation is a distinguishing element of this process.

Learners are given the authority to choose what and how they study. At the same time, teachers' roles are being changed to become facilitators for learners in terms of how desired learning might happen and how evaluation should be done (Kenyon & Hase, 2013). To be a successful facilitator, instructors must be more creative and open to new knowledge and technology, as well as diverse student experiences and learning techniques that are different from their own (Kang & Pavlova, 2019). This is also a prerequisite in 21st-century education, as teachers must take on a variety of responsibilities in the new century, including learning leaders, resource guides, connection-making guides, and network facilitators. Kenyon & Hase (2013) have introduced the theory of self-learning or heutagogy. The essence of heutagogy is that it gives learners power over their learning process, allowing them to delve further into the topic. Future learners who are part of the technology-savvy generation (BizShifts-Trends, 2013) will value this learning technique more as a result of technological advancements.

In designing the heutagogical approach, the collaboration between facilitators and learners in creating the curriculum is essential in the process. Application of heutagogy in education environments requires that the focus of teaching and learning shifts to the learner. Change must occur throughout the system to accomplish this student-centeredness in the educational process, resulting in modified roles for the learner, the instructor, and the institution. Instructors negotiate with learners for their evaluation process, and finally need to help learners in the learning process to ensure their lifelong learning and professional development. Furthermore, Blaschke & Hase (2015b) identified six design features that must be included such as explore, create, collaborate, connect, share and reflex.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

- (i) to identify the characteristic of lifelong learning among students in a public university of Malaysia,
- (ii) to identify the preferences of heutagogy activities among students in a public university of Malaysia,
- (iii) to determine the relationship between lifelong learning characteristic and preferences of heutagogy activities among students in a public university of Malaysia.

In order to accomplish these objectives, a quantitative research approach will be used among students in higher learning institutions. This study offers new information on the characteristic of lifelong learning and its influence on the preferences of heutagogy teaching and learning approaches among the students. This may provide information for educators to understand their learners better.

### Conceptual Framework

For this study, the main element in each domain will be based on existing instrument that has been used and validated in previous study. For the characteristic of lifelong learning, researcher will refer to the Lifelong Learning instrument proposed by (Kirby et al., 2010). It is undeniable the variety of existing lifelong learning instrument worldwide. However, this research will adapt Kirby et al (2010) as it is specifically designed for use in the institutes of higher learning (Meerah et al., 2011). In this, there are five characteristics of lifelong learning that is deem to be relevant for higher education students as proposed by (Candy et al., 1994; Knapper & Cropley, 2000). The five characteristics are (1) goal- setting; (2) application of knowledge and skills; (3) self-direction and self-evaluation; (4) information location; and (5) learning strategy adaptation. The lifelong learning characteristics will act as the independent variable of the study.

For the dependent variable, preferences of heutagogy activities, this study will adapt instrument from Mohamad et al (2020) which was developed based on the heutagogy activities proposed by (Hase, 2016). The elements are Explore, Create, Collaborate, Connect, Reflex and Share. The heutagogy activities will be the independent variables in this study.

This study aims to identify the relationship between the preferences of heutagogy activities and characteristic of lifelong learning. This is due to the fact that heutagogy or self-determine learning itself is part of lifelong learning. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for this study.

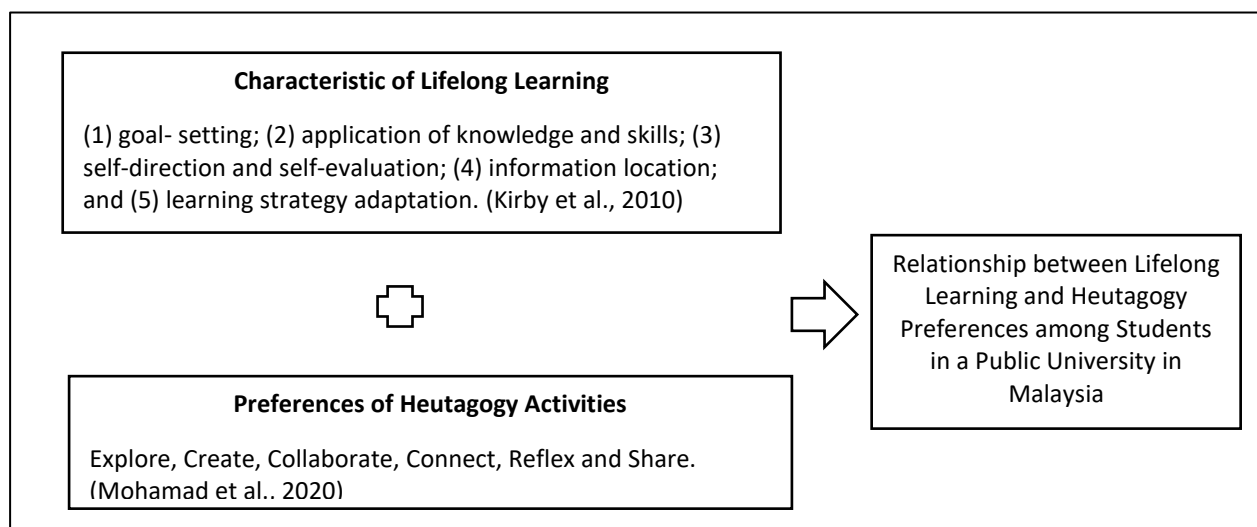


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### Research Design

There will be two phased in this study beginning with Generative Phase and follow by Phase One. In Generative Phase, researcher will explore on the issues related to lifelong learning and heutagogy through literature review. The exploration will involved several search engine including Google Scholar and Scopus. Then, researcher will develop the instrument based on existing instrument that will be identified from previous researches, confirm the face and content, and conduct a pilot study with 30 students who will be chosen at random. A pilot study will be analyzed using the SPSS software to confirm that the

questionnaire items produced are reliable and valid. Once the instrument has been validated and ready for actual study in Phase One.

Phase One begin with distribution of questionnaires to the sample. Population identification will be done beforehand to get the number of sample. They are the Bachelor's degree students in a public university in Malaysia. Then, the data collection will begin with distribution of questionnaire using both physical distribution and online distribution. After the data collection, data analysis will be done using SPSS software to analyse the data. Then, the result will be interpreted and discuss in final phase.

There will be an expansion on the current understanding of the students in terms of lifelong learning characteristics and preferences of heutagogy activities by identifying the dominant aspect of two domains in 21st Century education, namely lifelong learning and self-determine learning. This research will present a clear picture of these aspects of students, as well as some insights into which types of teaching and learning are most appropriate and useful for them.

### **Expected Outcome**

This study is expected to produce several outcomes including new knowledge on the lifelong learning characteristic dominancy and the heutagogy activities preferences among students. This study also expected to produce new knowledge on the type of relationship, if exist, between heutagogy activities preferences and the lifelong learning characteristics among students. This will also contributes to the body of knowledge in a way of how both element can influence each other thus assist the planning of teaching and learning that may enhance both elements equally.

### **Conclusion**

By identifying the dominant aspect of two domains in 21st Century education namely lifelong learning and self-determine learning, there will be an expansion on the current understanding of the students in terms of characteristics of lifelong learning and preferences of heutagogy activities. This study will provide a clear presentation on these elements of students, giving some insights on which teaching and learning is more appropriate and useful for them. Furthermore, student will be directly benefited from this study as its findings may encourage them to consider other heutagogical activities and enhance other lifelong learning characteristics. They may have better understanding on their learning preferences which will help them in designing their own learning process. Moreover, a detail presentation on the relationship between lifelong learning and heutagogy involved in this study may serve as a tool for future studies. The developed instrument that will be used in this study can be used for future study in different scope of student while the result can be used for future discussion on the characteristics of lifelong learning and heutaogical activities preferences among higher education institution students.



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