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## Copyright

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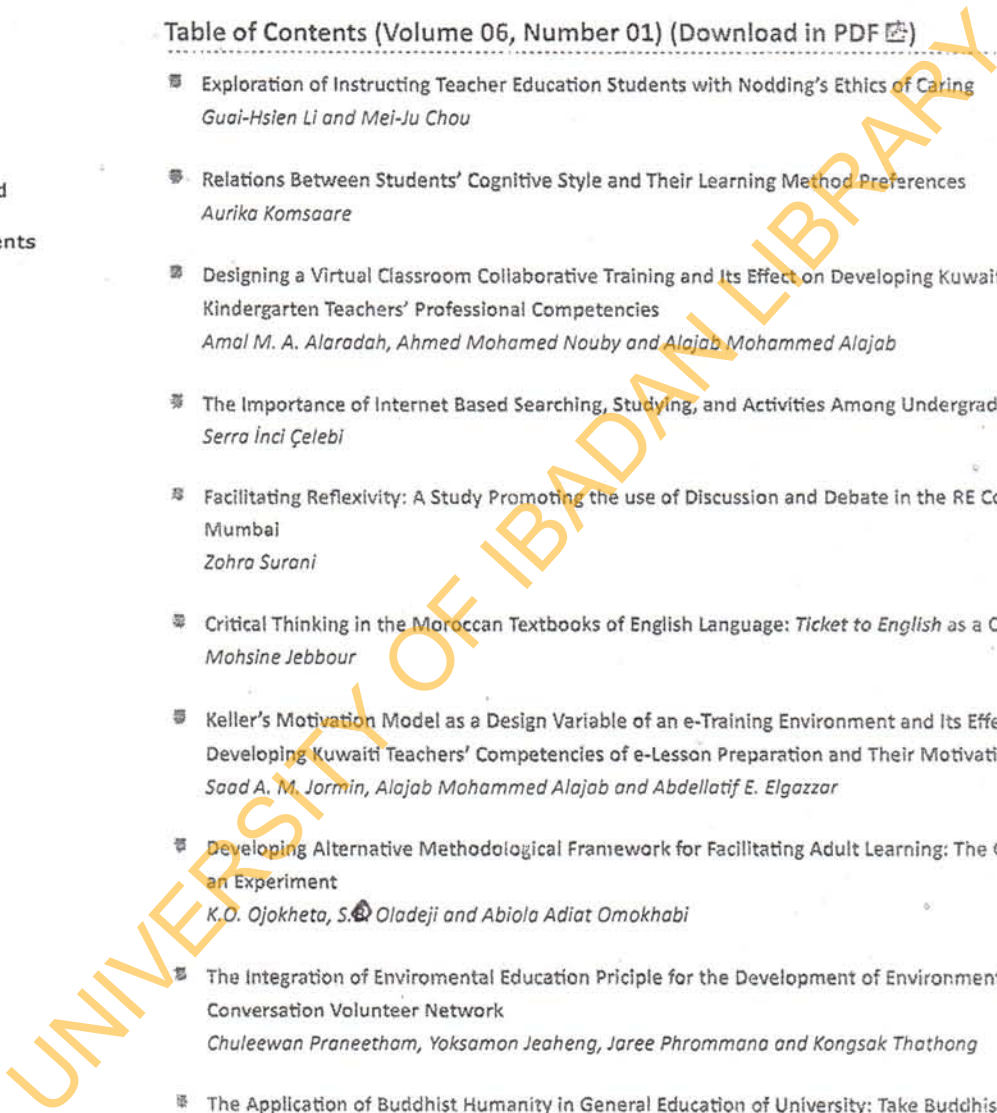
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## Developing Alternative Methodological Framework for Facilitating Adult Learning: The Outcome of an Experiment

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents the outcome of an experiment on an alternative method of facilitating adult learning called DISSAAP. It is an acronym where D stands for Discussion of learning content, I for identification of Deductions, S for Summation of recurring major deductions, S for synthesis of deductions in order of importance, A for Agreement of synthesis, A for Adoption of the synthesis, and P for Presentation. This approach was experimented with a group of adult learners participating in a University Distance Learning Programme with the concept of motivation as the course content. Learners were allowed to discuss individually what could motivate them to achieve effective learning. From the discussion, deductions made by them were identified. The major recurring deductions were recognised and summed up for synthesis which were, thereafter, arranged in their order of importance. In collaboration with the facilitators, agreement of the synthesis was reached with the learners for adoption of what motivate adult learners. The adoption led to the presentation of the new knowledge on motivation of adult learners for general acceptability by the learners. Findings of the experiments show that learners' intuitive capacity, power, and empowerment to arrive at knowledge themselves were greatly enhanced which led to active participation of the learners in the teaching and learning process. The experiment proved that "DISSAAP" is an effective methodological approach for facilitating adult learning and is, therefore, recommended for adult educators and facilitators.

**Keywords:** Developing, Alternative Methodological Framework, Facilitating, Adult Learners, Experiment.

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## DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR FACILITATING ADULT LEARNING: THE OUTCOME OF AN EXPERIMENT

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This paper presents the outcome of an experiment on an alternative method of facilitating adult learning called DISSAAP. It is an acronym where D stands for Discussion of learning content, I for identification of Deductions, S for Summation of recurring major deductions, S for synthesis of deductions in order of importance, A for Agreement of synthesis, A for Adoption of the synthesis, and P for Presentation. This approach was experimented with a group of adult learners participating in a University Distance Learning Programme with the concept of motivation as the course content. Learners were allowed to discuss individually what could motivate them to achieve effective learning. From the discussion, deductions made by them were identified. The major recurring deductions were recognised and summed up for synthesis which were, thereafter, arranged in their order of importance. In collaboration with the facilitators, agreement of the synthesis was reached with the learners for adoption of what motivate adult learners. The adoption led to the presentation of the new knowledge on motivation of adult learners for general acceptability by the learners. Findings of the experiments show that learners' intuitive capacity, power, and empowerment to arrive at knowledge themselves were greatly enhanced which led to active participation of the learners in the teaching and learning process. The experiment proved that "DISSAAP" is an effective methodological approach for facilitating adult learning and is, therefore, recommended for adult educators and facilitators.

**Keywords:** Developing, Alternative Methodological Framework, Facilitating, Adult Learners, Experiment.

### Introduction

Adult learners are peculiar set of learners. They encounter many difficulties in their learning as a result of diverse responsibilities associated with adult life. Thorpe (1987) submitted that "studying in adult life is always a difficult process with pains and disappointment". She also argued that:

the task of reading often raises the humdrum problem of becoming bored very quickly and inspires the intensely felt attraction towards making a cup of tea, tidying the shelves, watching a television programme or whatever after only a couple of paragraphs of reading. Hence, a lot may be at stake for adult students whose studies in effect set them apart from the interest and aspirations of friends or withdraw from their family.



In his explanation of the problems faced by adult learners in their study, Parker (2003) contended that:

Isolation, anxiety, and a failure to control the pace of work successfully are particular problems with adult learners (who may not have undertaken a substantial piece of learning for some times). They tend to have lost (or sometimes never have acquired) the skills of studying. They may, therefore, spend hours reading every word of a book which only needs to be scanned. They may attempt laborious verbatim recording where sketchy notes would be more appropriate.

The learning difficulty experienced by adult learners, most times, creates anxiety on them to succeed. Thorpe (1987) put it succinctly: "An adult learner who is desperately anxious to succeed can be extremely deflated by early study problems or poor performance and can drop out as a result. This anxiousness sometimes leads to nervousness probably due to lack of sensitive reading".

This is why the facilitation of learning with adult learners is an important, exhilarating, and profound activity (Brookfield, 2001). The major reasons most adults participate in any learning programme is to create a change in their skills, behaviour, knowledge level or their attitude about things (Russell, 2006).

Adult learners' physiological composition coupled with their advancement in age makes it imperative for anyone facilitating learning with them to accord them special attention. It was in this context that Malcolm Knowles (1980) popularized a theory on adult learning called 'Andragogy'. This theory emanated from an earlier theory 'Androgogy' which was developed by Alexander Knapp and Eugen Rosenstock-Hussey. Knowles argued that adult learners need a learning framework completely different from the traditional pedagogical school-based culture. According to him, Andragogy refers to "the art and science of helping adults to learn".

Knowles contended that Andragogy was premised on the following characteristics:

- **The need to know-** Adult learners want to know why they need to learn something. They want to understand the value and relevance of such learning. They also desire that such learning meet their needs and help them to achieve their goals.
- **Learners' self-concept-** Adult learners want to be respected and be seen as capable learners. They must be encouraged to set their learning goals. They are usually independent, self-motivated, and self-directed in their learning. They also like to find their way, want to manage their own learning, and make their own decisions.
- **Role of the learners experience-**Adult learners are a valuable resource because they bring the richness and diversity of their lives to their learning. They must be given the opportunity to use their existing knowledge and experience which they can apply to new learning experiences. They use their reflective and reasoning skills to solve learning problems.
- **Readiness to learn-**Adults are ready to learn when they identify something they want to know or become proficient at, or when they experience something that connects with their life situations. They become ready to learn things in order to cope effectively with real-life situations. They are goal focused, want timely learning, seek meaningful learning experiences, and need clear learning goals.
- **Orientations to learning-**Adult learners want to be engaged in life-centred or problem-centred learning experiences. They want to learn what will help them perform tasks or deal with problems they see in their lives. They are practical oriented, that is they want their learning to apply to their lives, jobs, among others. They want to be involved in planning their learning. They want to focus on the aspects that are most useful to them.

Based on these characteristics, Oladeji and Ojokheta, (2014) developed a framework for understanding adult learners. According to them, an adult learner is:

- Someone who identifies a knowledge gap in his or her existence and wishes to fill the gap by enrolling in a learning programme.

- ☐ Someone who takes a second chance opportunity to learn.
- ☐ Someone who desires to update his or her existing level of knowledge.
- ☐ Someone who desires to keep abreast of happenings in his or her immediate environment and beyond.
- ☐ Someone who aspires for continued learning for self actualisation.
- ☐ Someone who seeks a change in attitude and behaviour by enrolling in a learning programme.
- ☐ Someone who does not want to be left behind or become irrelevant in the ever changing and fast paced world.
- ☐ Someone whose urge and love for learning is insatiable.
- ☐ Someone who believes that learning is life-long in nature, that learning does not have a beginning or an end.
- ☐ Someone who believes in the development of the intellectual power of the mind.
- ☐ Someone who strives for unconditional self development.

From this description, it can be seen that perception of adult learners, in the contemporary world, is very wide and limitless. Irrespective of one's age, profession, and educational status, one can become an adult learner at any point in time since the world of today is driven by knowledge which makes learning become lifelong in nature.

Brookfield (2001) asserted that adult learning is a 'highly complex psychosocial drama in which the personalities of the individuals involved, the contextual setting for the educational transaction, and the prevailing political climate crucially affect the nature and form of learning'. He concluded that 'yet among the theorists and practitioners of adult learning, this complexity is frequently ignored'. Similarly, Wang, Victor and Farmer, Lesley (2008) argued that adult teaching methods mostly feature a teacher-centered, information-based, and test-driven instructional format. Ojokheta (2013) argued that learning facilitated with adult learners based on pedagogical framework is bound to fail due to the unsuitability of this framework for adult learners.

Against the backdrop of the fact that adult learners have many responsibilities that must be balanced with the demands of learning, facilitators must, therefore, have in-depth knowledge of how best to facilitate learning with them. However, most facilitators do not take this into consideration in Nigeria. They focus their facilitation processes on pedagogical framework where the 'instructor' is considered as having the monopoly of knowledge; someone who knows everything whom the learners always rely on in the acquisition of knowledge.

In many instances, scholars have stressed that facilitators in adult learning should serve as a helper in the learning process. They are the interfacing agent between the learning components and the adult. The role of the facilitator is very crucial to the achievement outcome of the adult. Suffice to say that no matter the level of motivation of adult learners in any learning programme, their achievement outcome will strongly be determined by the techniques adopted by the facilitators to facilitate learning. According to Taylor (2000), discomfort (at the learning environment) is a natural and necessary part of the learning process; however, learners can work through the discomfort with the support of the facilitators.

In this sense, Benne (1957) argued that 'the role of the facilitators is to establish the appropriate methodology for learning, which to him is the experimental method. He, therefore, located the facilitators authority in 'the widening of a community of shared and evaluated experiences' It is in this context that this study experimented with a methodological framework that took into consideration the following principles:

- ☐ Everyone teaches and learns – knowledge is shared.
- ☐ The experience of the participants is the starting point.
- ☐ There is a joint creation of knowledge.
- ☐ There is no expert, but rather mutual respect for the knowledge and experience that all participants bring to the process.



The adoption of this methodology was based on the submission of Torres and Rosa-Maria (2000) when they asserted that “as our world moves rapidly into the information age, and as the demand for new learning increases, and knowledge about how people learn best continues to develop, referring back to how things have always been is not all that helpful”. The methodology was also informed by the views of Taylor, Marienau and Fiddler (2000) that “knowledge is derived from an individual's interaction with social processes and contexts and should be seen as a creative construction in which the individual learner is an actor or active participant or subject rather than a passive object”.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

This study was guided by four objectives:

1. To find-out if ‘DISSAAP’ could actually be utilized to facilitate adult learning.
2. To ascertain from the learners the advantages derivable in the application of DISSAAP methodology.
3. To find-out if DISAAP can improve learning performance of adult learners
4. To ascertain if ‘DISSAAP’ can be considered an effective methodological approach for facilitating adult learning.

### **Research Questions**

Two Research Questions were Raised to Guide the Study. They were

1. What advantages are derivable in the application of DISSAAP methodology?
2. Can DISAAP improve learning performance of adult learners?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on two models of adult learning- andragogy and libertarian, dialogic, and problem-posing educational model postulated by Paulo Freire in 1970. The universally recognised model of adult learning-Andragogy-has been criticized on many ground by scholars. For example, Gou and Jamal, (2011), highlighted the shortcomings of andragogy as being limited on how to teach an individual learner. He argued that andragogy is narrowly preoccupied with methodology which views an individual learner independently from the society. Newman (2011) also argued that andragogy does not propagate social change but moulds a person to conform to the contemporary situation. This connotes that learners participating in adult learning class that adopts andragogy as its model of facilitation will accept any situation within which they find themselves even if it is not favourable and will not initiate the process of bringing change.

Despite these criticisms of andragogy, the theoretical framework of this study is still premised on andragogy. This is because the cardinal philosophy of this model emphasizes that the core activity of learning is thrown to the adult learner. He is the core of the teaching and learning process, presumably the initiator and the chief executor. Therefore, the role and importance of the teacher are played down: the teacher is no longer the authoritarian ‘Mr. Know-all’ who towers above the learners. He is no longer the sole dispenser of knowledge to learners.

This study made extensive use of this philosophy. The responsibility of learning was placed on them. The facilitator became democratic rather than autocratic by sharing knowledge with the learners rather than imparting knowledge to them. This learning process was fashioned based on the belief that the facilitator must ‘talk with the learners’ rather than ‘talk to the learners’. The learners were treated as equal partners in the process of knowledge acquisition.

Similarly, this study laid its framework on Freire's model. Freire argued that a learning arrangement where knowledge is viewed or seen as a gift bestowed on the learners offends the freedom and autonomy of the learners. According to him, this type of learning arrangement domesticates learners because it emphasizes the transfer of existing knowledge to passive objects; submerges their consciousness and produces alienated consciousness since the learners are not involved in a real act of knowing, but given ready-made view of social reality.

## Methodology

The study was not designed and carried out in the strict specifications of quantitative experimental design even though the title of the study reads 'The outcome of an experiment'. Therefore, the design adopted was exploratory research. The population of the study comprised 21 final year adult learning students participating in the Distance Learning Programme of University of Ibadan-the first University established in Nigeria in 1948. The course experimented with was Adult Education course titled "Introduction to Distance Education" where the concept of motivation was taught as a component of the course content. During the facilitation process, DISSAAP was applied. DISSAAP is an acronym where **D** stands for Discussion of learning content, **I** for identification of Deductions, **S** for Summation of recurring major deductions, **S** for synthesis of deductions, **A** for Agreement of synthesis, **A** for Adoption of the synthesis, and **P** for Presentation. The study was carried out in 2014/2015 academic contact session with the learners.

### Step-by-Step application of DISSAAP

**Step 1:** Learners readiness-Learners were briefly introduced and given details of the exercise. They were asked to view knowledge as a process they have to engage in themselves rather than being given a ready-made view of the topic for discussion by the team of researchers.

**Step 2:** They were introduced to DISSAAP as alternative methodology to be used to facilitate learning in the class and the acronym explained to them.

**Step 3:** The topic 'Motivation' was introduced to the class and the procedure for discussing it was explained to them. The learners were asked to discuss what motivation means to them in the first procedure. They were asked to discuss the various examples of motivation supported with illustrations and explanations in the second procedure. The third procedures involved the learners discussing the advantages of motivation, while the fourth procedure involved the learners discussing the types of motivation they would preferred in their learning.

**Step 4:** Learners were allowed to engage in the discussion of the topic.

**Step 5:** The major deductions from the discussion of the learners were identified by the co-researchers.

**Step 6:** The recurring deductions were summed up.

**Step 7:** The deductions were synthesized in order of importance.

**Step 8:** The deductions were read to the learners for possible additions or subtractions so as to achieve agreement of synthesis.

**Step 9:** The synthesis of the deductions was adopted with little modifications.

**Step 10:** The synthesis was finally presented to the class which constituted the piece of knowledge arrived at by the learners.



### Data Analysis

Data obtained in the study were analysed using the qualitative approach of phenomenological analysis. Similarly, the quantitative statistical approach of mean and standard deviation was used to ascertain if DISSAAP can contribute to improved learning performance of the learners.

### Results and Discussion

The synthesis of the deductions made during discussion of the topic by the learners is presented here using the phenomenological analytic approach. During the discussion, the following deductions on the meaning of motivation were identified, summed up, and synthesized:

#### Dimension of Learners Discussion: Definition of Motivation

- i. Motivation as incentives people received to encourage them to exhibit desired behaviour.
- ii. Motivation is reward received if someone gives positive response or reply to a question.
- iii. Motivation is whatever that is done to get people to do things.
- iv. Motivation is the drive someone received to propel him or her to continue to do things.
- v. Motivation is the stimulated desire that energizes someone to continually show interest and commitment to what he or she is doing.

The synthesis of these deductions was presented to the class and members were asked to rate which of these deductions best summarized the most appropriate perception of motivation. The result is presented in table one below:

Table 1. Learners Perception of the most Appropriate Definition of Motivation

Synthesized Deductions	Learners response	Simple percentage of responses
1. Motivation as incentives people received to encourage them to exhibit desired behaviour.	05	23.8
2. Motivation is reward received if someone gives positive response or reply to a question.	03	14.4
3. Motivation is whatever that is done to get people to do things.	04	19.0
4. Motivation is the drive someone received to propel him or her to continue to do things.	02	9.5
5. Motivation is the stimulated desire that energizes someone to continually show interest and commitment to what he or she is doing.	07	33.3

Even though, all the deductions are correct of what motivation means, however, the analysis of table one shows that the fifth deduction represents the most appropriate perception of motivation by the respondents followed by the first deductions.

#### Dimension of Learners Discussion: Types of Motivation

The following deductions, during step on of DISSAP, on the types of motivation were identified, summed up, and synthesized. Learners categorised motivation into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. To them,

intrinsic motivation refers to the factors derive from within the individual learners which encourage them to engage in learning and it includes:

- i. The desire to fill a knowledge gap.
- ii. The desire to achieve optimal performance in learning
- iii. The desire to acquire additional knowledge
- iv. The desire to update one's knowledge
- v. The desire to have competitive advantage over other peers in knowledge possession

Extrinsic motivation to them refers to the techniques employ by facilitators to encourage learners' active participation in the learning process and it includes: cash or monetary reward, award of marks reward, graded round of applause reward (for example. 1 set, 2 set, 3 set, and continuous round of applause), verbal positive comments (for example. beautiful, lovely, marvelous, wonderful, immaculate response and so on), salutary reward, standing ovation reward, praise-singing reward, and bell-ringing reward.

#### Dimension of Learners Discussion: Importance of Motivation

The following deductions, during step one of DISSAAP, on the importance of motivation were identified, summed up, and synthesized as follows:

- i. Motivation in learning helps to stimulate interest of learners in learning.
- ii. Motivation makes learning become permanent as it facilitates easy recall of points and ideas during examinations.
- iii. Motivation encourages active participation of learners in learning.
- iv. Motivation makes learning interesting as dull moments are prevented.
- v. Motivation enhances retention of learners in a learning programme.
- vi. Motivation makes learners to engage in deeper thinking before making responses.
- vii. Motivation makes learners get prepared by reading ahead before a learning exercise

#### Dimension of Learners Discussion: Extrinsic Motivational Reward Types Preferred by the Respondents

Learners were asked which of the extrinsic motivational rewards will they preferred the facilitator to apply in their learning. The respondents' responses are presented in table two below:

Table 2. Extrinsic motivational reward types preferred by the respondents

Extrinsic motivational reward types	Learners response	Simple percentage of responses
1. Cash or monetary reward	0	0.0
2. Award of marks reward	07	33.3
3. Graded round of applause reward	02	9.5
4. Verbal positive comments	04	19.0
5. Salutary reward	01	4.8
6. Standing ovation reward	01	4.8
7. Praise-singing reward	05	23.8
8. Bell-ringing reward	01	4.8



From this table, it can be seen that the respondents preferred facilitators to reward positive response from the learners with award of marks (07 or ). This was followed by verbal positive comments (04 or ) and praise-singing reward (03 or ). The implication of this finding is that adult learners will prefer award of marks, verbal comments, and praise-singing as the most effective rewards to stimulate and sustain their continuous interest in any learning arrangement.

At the end of the discussion, the identification of deductions, Summation of recurring major deductions, and synthesis of deductions, the team of facilitators compiled and read the summary of the learners' discussion for agreement and adoption of the synthesis. The summary reads thus.

Motivation is the stimulated desire that energizes someone to continually show interest and commitment to what he or she is doing. It can also refer to incentives people received to encourage them to exhibit desired behaviour. Motivation can be classified into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the factors derive from within the individual learners which encourage them to engage in learning; it includes: the desire to fill a knowledge gap, the desire to achieve optimal performance in learning, and the desire to acquire additional knowledge among others. Motivation helps to stimulate learners' interest in learning, encourages active participation of learners in learning, and enhances retention of learners in a learning programme among others. Learners' motivation to learn can be enhanced through award of marks, verbal comments, and praise-singing.

The summary was, thereafter presented to the learners and was unanimously approved by them without any modification.

#### Analysis of Question One

Research question one was raised to find out from the learners the advantages derivable in the application of DISSAAP methodology. Learners were asked to rate their responses according to the variables listed below. The learners' responses are shown in table three.

Table 3. showing learners' responses to research question one

Advantages of DISSAAP	Yes response	No response	Percentage Response
1. Develops reasoning and critical thinking ability	21	0	100%
2. Allows learners to exercise control over their learning	21	0	100%
3. Promotes dialogue and reflection	21	0	100%
4. Democratizes knowledge generation	21	0	100%
5. Discourages the elitist tradition of teacher-dominated knowledge generation	21	0	100%
6. Promotes intensive tutor-learner interaction	21	0	100%
7. Gives a 'voice' to the learners.	21	0	100%

From this table, it can be seen that all the respondents were unanimous in rating DISSAAP positively. To them, this methodology helps in developing reasoning and critical thinking ability in the learners, allows them to exercise control over their learning, promotes dialogue and reflection, democratizes knowledge generation as all the learners are involved, discourages the elitist tradition of

teacher-dominated knowledge generation, promotes intensive tutor-learner interaction, and gives a 'voice' to the learners. Therefore, the responses of the learners have shown that DISSAAP can actually be applied and utilized as an alternative and effective methodological approach for facilitating adult learning.

### Analysis of Research Question Two

In order to ascertain if DISSAAP can enhance improved learning performance among the learners, five questions were set during the examination of the course Adult Education 410. It is instructive to state that apart from the concept of motivation which was self-taught by the learners themselves, the other four questions were taught through the lecture method where the learners were given ready-made view of the examiner on the topics. The performance score of the learners on each of the questions is presented in table four.

The five questions examined in the examination were:

- Q1: Examine, with detailed examples, the characteristics of Distance Learning Students?  
 Q2: Discuss vividly the guidance and counselling needs of Distance Learning Students?  
 Q3: What characteristics do you think a distance learning facilitator should possess and put into practice during the facilitation process?  
 Q4: Discuss, with relevant examples, the meaning and types of motivation in a learning programme. What importance do you think motivation would play in a distance learning programme?  
 Q5: Examine three theories that you think can guide the practice of Distance Education?

Table 4. showing the performance score of the learners on each of the questions

Examination Questions	1-5 Marks	6-10 Marks	11-15 Marks	16-20 Marks	21-25 Marks
Q1: Examine, with detailed examples, the characteristics of Distance Learning Students.	1	3	1	-	-
Q2: Discuss vividly the guidance and counselling needs of Distance Learning Students.	-	4	2	-	-
Q3: What characteristics do you think a distance learning facilitator should possess and put into practice during the facilitation process?	-	1	1	-	-
Q4: Discuss, with relevant examples, the meaning and types of motivation in a learning programme. What importance do you think motivation would play in a distance learning programme?	-	-	1	4	1
Q5: Examine three theories that you think can guide the practice of Distance Education.	-	1	1	-	-

Analysis of the performance score of the respondents shown in table four revealed that 5 learners answered question one and 1 respondent scored between 1-5, 3 respondents scored between 6 and 10 marks while 1 respondent scored between 11 and 15 marks. 6 learners answered question two, 4 of them scored between 6 and 10 marks while 2 scored between 10 and 15 marks. Two learners answered question three and scored between 6 and 10 marks and 11-15 respectively. 6 learners answered question four, one student scored between 11 and 15 marks, 4 of them scored between 16 and 20 marks, while the other one respondent scored 20 and 25. Two students answered question five and scored between 6 and ten marks and 11 and 15 marks. The analysis showed that the respondents performed better on the question which was used for this experiment. If other questions had been taught using the DISSAPP methodology, probably the learners would have performed better. This result revealed that DISSAP can tremendously enhance learners' performance during an examination.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that an alternative methodology for facilitating adult learning is possible. In this context, DISSAAP methodology has proved to be an effective methodology which can be applied to facilitate adult learning judging from the outcome of this experiment. DISSAAP is, therefore, recommended to be adopted by facilitators as an appropriate methodology which can be used in any learning activity where the adults are the primary beneficiaries. However, it must be stressed that adult learners' facilitators, during the facilitation process, need to demonstrate certain traits and conducts associated with effective facilitation. They must also possess the skills of effective organization and coordination of ideas, as well as that of attentiveness and human relations for effective inter-group relationship. It is equally important to stress that DISSAAP methodology is not limited, in terms of application, to a small class as used in this study. It can also be applied to a large class if the facilitator possesses the skills identified above.

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