



Supporting Adult Learner Motivation Through Learner-Centered Design: Reflections from Three Iterations of a Professional Continuing Education Course

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Abstract— Digital technology has reshaped higher education and the workplace, increasing the need for continuous skills development while expanding opportunities for flexible and accessible learning. Continuing education has therefore become an important avenue for professionals to develop knowledge and competencies in response to changing demands. However, access to online courses does not necessarily ensure sustained engagement or completion. This study examines how learner-centered course design can support adult learner motivation and persistence in professional continuing education, using a course offered by the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) as a case. A qualitative case study approach was used, supported by descriptive analysis of institutional data from three successive offerings of the Integrating Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in Policies, Plans and Investments toward Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (CCA&DRM) course conducted from 2025 to 2026. Data included learner profiles, enrollment and completion records, course evaluations, implementation records, and two completer reflections. Completion rates increased from 23% to 55% and 88% across the three offerings, while the course received an overall mean evaluation of 4.63. Learners' reported motivations included professional development, academic preparation, practical application, environmental advocacy, and sustainability. Completer reflections further highlighted the value of relevant content, learning resources, recognition, and interaction in supporting learner engagement and persistence. The findings suggest that learner-centered continuing education should align course content with learners' goals, provide opportunities for authentic application, and strengthen interaction and support. The study highlights the potential of iterative, learner-centered course design in supporting adult learner motivation and persistence in professional online continuing education.

Keywords— *adult learners, learner-centered learning, continuing education, learner motivation, online learning, professional development*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of both higher education and the workplace. The widespread adoption of artificial intelligence, advanced analytics, cloud computing, and other digital technologies has changed the nature of work and increased the need for professionals to continuously develop new knowledge, skills, and competencies [1]. At the same time, digital technologies have reshaped how education is accessed and delivered, providing learners with opportunities to participate in online courses, virtual classrooms, and other flexible learning environments beyond traditional educational settings [2].

These developments have contributed to the growing importance of continuing education as a pathway for lifelong learning. For working professionals, continuing education provides opportunities to acquire new competencies while remaining engaged in employment and other personal responsibilities even across geographical and time constraints. Adult learners may participate in continuing education for different reasons, including professional advancement, personal development, academic preparation, and the practical application of knowledge [10], [12]. Recent research also indicates that adult learners demonstrate varied motivational profiles, suggesting that their goals and expectations should be considered when designing online learning experiences [14], [15].

However, increased access and flexibility do not necessarily guarantee learner engagement or persistence. Adult learners may begin an online course with clear academic or professional goals but encounter competing work responsibilities, time constraints, personal commitments, or

difficulties associated with learning in an online environment. Understanding what motivates adult learners to participate and persist is therefore important in designing effective continuing education programs. While learners bring their own goals, experiences, and reasons for participation, the learning environment may also influence how they engage with and persist in a course [3], [4], [12].

This makes learner-centered design particularly relevant to online continuing education. Learner-centered approaches recognize that learners have different educational backgrounds, prior knowledge, motivations, expectations, and circumstances. In an online environment, this involves more than providing access to course content. It includes designing clear learning pathways, relevant activities, opportunities for interaction, appropriate assessment, and mechanisms for learner support that respond to learners' needs and contexts [5]–[8], [14].

Although previous research has examined learner engagement, satisfaction, persistence, and completion, completion statistics provide only part of the picture. They indicate whether learners completed a course but do not necessarily explain their motivations, the aspects of the learning experience that supported their persistence, or the challenges that may have affected their engagement [3], [4]. There is also limited discussion of how learner experiences across successive offerings of professional continuing education programs can inform the continuous improvement of learner-centered course design. This gap is particularly relevant for institutions that regularly offer non-formal online education to adult learners with diverse professional goals and responsibilities. Recent reviews likewise point to the need for more context-sensitive and methodologically diverse research on adult learner motivation and online persistence [4], [15].

As an open and distance learning institution, the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), through the Faculty of Management and Development Studies (FMDS), provides opportunities for learners to pursue education beyond conventional classroom and geographical boundaries. Its Continuing Education Program offers non-formal learning opportunities for professionals and other individuals seeking to develop knowledge and competencies relevant to their work and interests.

One such course is the Integrating Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in Policies, Plans and Investments toward Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (CCA&DRM). The course is a fully online, 12-week non-formal course developed by UPOU in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and the University of the Philippines Open University Foundation, Inc. It provides foundational and applied knowledge on climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, and sustainable agricultural and rural development.

The course attracted adult learners from diverse professional backgrounds. Across its three offerings between February 2025 and April 2026, learners included professionals from government, private organizations, international organizations, research, education, engineering, environmental management, disaster risk reduction, and other sectors. They reported varied reasons for enrolling, including strengthening professional knowledge and competencies, applying learning to planning and project implementation, preparing for graduate studies, pursuing professional development, supporting environmental advocacy, and contributing to sustainability initiatives.

The three offerings also provide an opportunity to examine learner persistence across successive course implementations. Completion increased from 23% in the first offering to 55% in the second and 88% in the third. Although these figures do not establish a causal relationship between course design and completion, they provide a useful basis for examining the learner experience and the potential contribution of learner-centered strategies and support mechanisms to persistence. The course was also positively evaluated, receiving an overall mean rating of 4.63, while learner support received a mean of 4.50, the lowest among the major evaluation categories despite remaining highly satisfactory.

Given this, the paper examines adult learner motivation and persistence in a professional continuing education course through a learner-centered lens. It explores learner reflections and course-level evidence from three successive offerings of the CCA&DRM course to explore what motivates learners to participate and persist, which aspects of the learning environment support their engagement, and what lessons can inform future course design.

The study is guided by the following general question: How can learner-centered design support adult learner motivation and persistence in professional continuing education?

Specifically, it seeks to answer:

1. What motivates adult learners to enroll in and persist in the CCA&DRM professional continuing education MOOC?
2. What learner-centered course features and support mechanisms do learners perceive as facilitating their engagement and persistence?
3. What insights from the three successive course offerings can inform the design of more motivating and learner-centered professional continuing education course?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Adult Learner Motivation and Persistence in Online Learning

The growing demand for continuing education has made learner motivation and persistence increasingly important considerations in online learning. Adult learners often enter courses with specific academic, professional, or personal goals, and their decision to remain engaged may depend on

how they perceive the relevance and value of the learning experience. Yang, Baldwin, and Snelson found that persistence in a fully online graduate program was influenced by both personal and program-related factors. Personal factors included career goals, time and effort invested, and perceived utility of learning, while program-related factors included course relevance, satisfaction, quality of coursework, instructor feedback, and connections between learning and professional advancement [3]. These findings suggest that completion should not be viewed independently from learners' goals and experiences.

This perspective is supported by a recent systematic review of online persistent learning. Shi, Li, and Shadieff identified several dimensions associated with persistence, including learning environments, learning activities, support strategies, interaction, and learner engagement [4]. The review also points to limitations in existing research, particularly the need for approaches that can capture the dynamic nature of persistence throughout the learning process. These findings are particularly relevant to professional continuing education, where learners may be simultaneously managing employment, personal responsibilities, and learning commitments.

Thus, examining persistence requires attention not only to whether learners complete a course but also to why they participate, what they perceive as valuable, and what helps or prevents them from remaining engaged.

Recent literature further supports the importance of examining motivation among adult learners in continuing education. Das and Kumar identified several motivational orientations among adult learners enrolled in lifelong learning programs, including professional advancement, communication skills and social contact, intellectual recreation, cognitive interest, and family-related motivations [10]. Their findings also showed that the relative importance of these motivations varied according to learners' age, gender, course type, and educational background. This suggests that adult learners should not be treated as a homogeneous group and that their reasons for participation may reflect both personal and professional goals.

Gardner et al. similarly found that adult learner motivation is associated with educational decision-making, including the choice of degree, academic program, and enrollment status [11]. Their study showed that adult learners may be motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The authors further found that as work experience increased, learners were more likely to demonstrate extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation. These findings are relevant to professional continuing education because learners' motivations may be closely connected to career development, employment, and other practical outcomes.

Urban and Jirsáková also found that adult learners enrolled in part-time education demonstrated higher achievement motivation than traditional students [12]. Their findings suggest that adult learners tend to be more strongly oriented toward occupational goals, self-direction, and the application of motivation to work and study. At the same time, the authors noted that adult learners may need to balance education with full-time employment and other responsibilities, which can affect their educational experience and persistence.

Research also indicates that motivation is influenced by the learning environment. Hussain, Salam, and Farid found that adult learners' motivation was shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including the quality of the learning environment, instructional support, and opportunities for engaging learning activities [13]. Their findings suggest that maintaining adult learner motivation requires not only recognizing learners' internal goals but also creating supportive conditions that encourage continued participation.

More recent research has examined motivation specifically within online learning environments. Zhang et al. identified different motivation profiles among adult learners in open and online education, involving relatedness, mastery and performance goals, intrinsic motivation, and utility value [14]. Their mixed-methods study demonstrated that adult learners exhibit different combinations of motivational characteristics and emphasized the importance of designing online courses and learning activities that respond to these differences. The authors particularly highlighted the need for differentiated approaches to support adult learners' unique goals and needs.

The broader literature also indicates that adult learner motivation remains an evolving area of research. Bílá and Kalenda's scoping review of 95 empirical studies published between 1971 and 2024 found increasing research interest in adult learner motivation, particularly since 2016. However, they identified a concentration of studies in European and Anglophone contexts and noted the need for broader cultural representation, mixed-methods approaches, and longitudinal research [15]. These gaps highlight the value of examining adult learner motivation within specific institutional and educational contexts, particularly in online and continuing education settings.

Learner-Centered Approaches to Online Learning

Learner-centered education places learners' needs, experiences, interests, goals, and participation at the center of the learning process. Darsih describes learner-centered teaching as an approach that gives learners greater responsibility and autonomy while positioning the teacher as a facilitator of learning. The approach emphasizes learner needs, interests, goals, active participation, feedback, and varied learning strategies [5]. Such an approach is particularly relevant to adult learners, who bring prior experiences and established professional or personal goals into the learning environment.

In online education, learner-centered design requires consideration of how learners interact with content, instructors, peers, and learning activities. McCombs and Vakili proposed a learner-centered framework for e-learning that integrates cognitive, motivational, developmental, social, and individual-difference factors [6]. The framework emphasizes the importance of considering learners' experiences, perspectives, interests, capacities, and needs in designing effective learning environments. This perspective positions learner-centeredness as more than a teaching technique; it is an approach to designing the overall learning experience.

Similarly, Glancy and Isenberg proposed a conceptual learner-centered e-learning framework grounded in adult learning and other learning theories. Their framework emphasizes self-directed learning and the need to design

online environments that support adult learners' control over and active participation in the learning process [7].

Learner-centered design may also be expressed through flexibility and choice. Hanewicz, Platt, and Arendt examined an online course that allowed students to select from different types of assignments. The course included conventional academic tasks as well as applied activities, giving learners opportunities to choose tasks based on their interests and preferred ways of demonstrating learning [8]. The authors found that students responded positively to having flexible options, while real-life activities allowed learners to apply course concepts to relevant problems and assume greater responsibility for their learning [8].

These studies suggest that learner-centered online education should provide opportunities for autonomy, relevance, active participation, flexibility, and authentic application. These characteristics are particularly appropriate for professional continuing education, where learners are likely to connect course content with existing work, academic, or community contexts.

Interaction, Support, and Persistence

Learner-centered online learning also involves meaningful interaction among learners, instructors, course content, and the technological environment. Katsarou and Chatzipanagiotou's review of literature on learner-centered interactions identifies learner-instructor, learner-content, learner-learner, and learner-interface interactions as important dimensions of online learning [9]. These forms of interaction provide opportunities for learners to clarify concepts, exchange experiences, receive feedback, and develop connections within the online learning environment.

Interaction is particularly relevant to adult learners participating in distance education because the flexibility of online learning may also create a sense of separation from instructors and peers. Learner-centered interaction therefore requires more than simply providing discussion forums or communication channels; it involves creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue and participation.

Support is similarly important to persistence. Yang et al. identified instructor feedback, course quality, perceived learning, course relevance, and institutional support among factors associated with persistence in online learning [3]. Shi et al. likewise identified support strategies, learning activities, engagement, and interaction as important dimensions of online persistence [4]. These findings suggest that persistence is influenced not only by learners' initial motivation but also by the support and learning experiences they encounter throughout the course.

Learners may initially enroll because a course is relevant to their professional or academic goals, but maintaining participation may require appropriate learning resources, clear guidance, meaningful interaction, feedback, and support. Learner-centered design can therefore provide a bridge between initial learner motivation and sustained engagement.

The literature showed three interconnected dimensions of effective online continuing education. First, adult learner motivation and persistence are influenced by learners' goals, perceived relevance, usefulness of learning, and the conditions surrounding their participation [3], [4]. Second, learner-centered design emphasizes autonomy, active participation,

flexibility, learner needs, and authentic application [5]–[8]. Third, interaction and support contribute to the quality of the online learning experience and may facilitate continued engagement and persistence [3], [4], [9].

Despite these insights, completion rates alone cannot fully explain why learners remain engaged or discontinue their participation. Understanding persistence requires attention to learners' own experiences and perceptions alongside institutional evidence. This is particularly relevant to professional continuing education, where learners have diverse backgrounds, motivations, and competing responsibilities.

The present study addresses this gap by examining learner motivation and persistence across three successive offerings of a continuing education course CCA&DRM at the University of the Philippines Open University. The study explores how learner-centered design and support may contribute to a more motivating online learning experience.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative case study supported by descriptive analysis of institutional course data. Specifically, the study focused on the Integrating Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in Policies, Plans and Investments toward Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (CCA&DRM) online course offered by the Faculty of Management and Development Studies (FMDS), University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) across three successive implementations from 2025 to 2026. The study examined learner motivation, perceived learning experiences, and persistence using learner reflections and course-level evidence.

Data Sources

Four sources of evidence were used: 1) learner profile data; 2) enrollment and completion data; 3) course evaluation results; and 4) learner reflection. The learner reflection was collected through an open-ended questionnaire sent to course completers.

The questionnaire asked about: motivation for enrollment; factors that sustained participation; helpful course features; challenges encountered; and recommendations for future learners. These questions were used to capture learners' perspectives on the factors that influenced their participation and persistence.

The learner profile, enrollment, and completion data were used to describe participation patterns across the three course offerings. Course evaluation results were used to examine learners' perceptions of the course, including its learning resources, activities, interaction, and support mechanisms. The learner reflection provided additional qualitative insight into the experiences underlying these course-level patterns.

Data Analysis

Institutional data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, and mean ratings. Enrollment and completion data were compared across the three course offerings to identify changes in completion patterns, while course evaluation results were examined to identify highly rated and comparatively lower-rated course features.

The learner reflection was examined using thematic analysis. Initial codes were developed from the learner's responses and grouped according to recurring concepts related to: initial motivation; persistence; learning resources; interaction; challenges; recognition; and perceived value of continuing education.

The findings were then interpreted using learner-centered learning, adult learning, and Self-Determination Theory as complementary conceptual lenses. The qualitative reflection and descriptive institutional data were considered together to examine how learner goals and experiences relate to course design, engagement, and persistence.

Scope of the Analysis

The analysis focused on understanding how learner-centered course design may support adult learner motivation and persistence rather than establishing causal relationships between specific course features and completion. The increase in completion across the three offerings was therefore treated as an observed course-level pattern, while learner reflections and course evaluations were used to provide insight into possible factors associated with engagement and persistence.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. CCA&DRM Learners Profile and Learners Motivation

The CCA&DRM course attracted learners with diverse professional and educational backgrounds. As shown in Table I, 32 learners were enrolled in the course across the three offerings from 2025 to 2026. The overall group consisted of 17 males (53.1%) and 15 females (46.9%), with ages ranging from 24 to 52 years and an approximate mean age of 36 years. Most learners had college or graduate-level education: 15 (46.9%) were college degree holders, 13 (40.6%) had master's or graduate-level education, three (9.4%) had doctoral-level education, and one (3.1%) had vocational education. Learners came from government, private-sector, self-employed, international, and other professional contexts. Their backgrounds included engineering, architecture, research, education, government, tourism and development, infrastructure, finance, consulting, business, environmental management, and disaster risk reduction.

TABLE I. CCA&DRM LEARNERS PROFILE

Profile Indicator	Summary
Total Learners	32
Course Offerings	Three offerings (2025-1, 2025-2, and 2026-1)
Gender	17 Male (53.1%); 15 Female (46.9%)
Age	24–52 years old (Mean age: approximately 36 years)
Citizenship	32 Filipino (100%)
Civil Status	17 Single (53.1%); 12 Married (37.5%); 2 Divorced/Separated (6.3%); 1 Other (3.1%)
Highest Educational Attainment	15 College Degree Holders (46.9%); 13 Master's/Graduate Level (40.6%); 3 Doctoral Level (9.4%); 1 Vocational (3.1%)
Employer Type	10 Public/Government (31.3%); 10 Private Sector (31.3%); 6 Self-employed (18.8%); 2 International Organizations (6.3%); 1 Student (3.1%); 1 Unemployed (3.1%); and 2 Not Specified (6.3%).
Geographic Distribution	Majority from NCR and other Luzon provinces, with participants from the Visayas

Profile Indicator	Summary
	and overseas (New Zealand, Singapore, and Australia).

The learners' motivations were likewise varied. The course report identifies the following reasons for participation:

- enhancing knowledge and practical competencies in CCA and DRM;
- applying knowledge to planning and project implementation;
- environmental advocacy;
- agricultural and infrastructure development;
- business resilience;
- community preparedness;
- professional development;
- credential enhancement;
- graduate study preparation; and
- sustainability and environmental protection.

These data indicate that enrollment was largely purpose-driven. Learners were seeking knowledge that could be connected to professional practice, academic work, community concerns, or personal advocacy. This supports the argument in the literature that adult learner persistence is influenced by perceived relevance, usefulness, career goals, and the connection between learning and professional advancement [3], [4].

The diversity of motivations also reflects the varied orientations of adult learners reported in previous studies, where professional, academic, cognitive, and personal goals may overlap [10]–[14]. This reinforces the importance of making the relevance and potential application of continuing education courses clear to learners from the outset.

The available completer reflection provides a more detailed example of this pattern. The learner reported enrolling because the course was directly relevant to an MA thesis on CCA and DRM and was expected to provide knowledge and insights that could strengthen the manuscript. This further illustrates how a clear connection between course content and an existing academic or professional goal can serve as an initial source of motivation.

However, the same reflection also shows that motivation may change during the learning process. The learner identified the *completion certificate* and the *financial investment* already made as factors that helped sustain completion, while limited interaction with classmates and instructors made the distance-learning experience less engaging and at one point led the learner to consider discontinuing.

Thus, the data suggest a distinction between motivation to enroll and motivation to persist. Initial motivation may be strongly connected to academic or professional relevance, while persistence may additionally depend on perceived value, recognition, learning resources, interaction, and support.

This finding is consistent with research showing that adult learners may have multiple motivational orientations and that motivation can be shaped by both learner goals and the learning environment [10], [12], [14]. In this case, the learner's reflection suggests that relevance initiated participation, while recognition and perceived value helped sustain it.

This interpretation is consistent with the institutional report, which identifies competing professional responsibilities, workload demands, personal commitments, and time constraints as challenges affecting completion.

The finding is important for professional continuing education because adult learners are not participating in isolation from their everyday lives. They are simultaneously workers, professionals, students, family members, or community practitioners. Consequently, a motivating course must not only provide relevant content but also create conditions that make continued participation manageable and worthwhile.

B. Learner-Centered Course Features and Support Mechanisms

The CCA&DRM course incorporated several features intended to support learning in a fully online environment. These included the *Course Guide, learning resources, learning activities, discussion forums, assessments, and an applied major assignment*. Online participation through discussion forums and quizzes accounted for 20% of the final grade, while the major assignment accounted for 80%. The major assignment required learners to develop a plan for integrating CCA and DRM into their own development context, allowing them to demonstrate both conceptual understanding and practical application.

The course evaluation data also shows that learners generally viewed these course features positively. As shown in Table II, the results indicate three particularly strong aspects of the learning experience.

First, the Course Coordinator received the highest rating (4.71). This suggests that instructional facilitation and access to a course-level support person were important strengths of the course. Second, the Course Guide (4.67), Course Site (4.66), and Learning Resources (4.63) were also highly rated. For adult learners managing their own schedules, clear structure and accessible resources can support self-directed participation. Third, Discussion Forums received a 4.63 rating, indicating favorable perceptions of the opportunity for online interaction.

The completer reflection reinforces the importance of learning resources. The learner specifically identified the learning materials, videos, and suggested reading links as particularly helpful in completing the course.

These findings suggest that the course's learner-centered features were generally well received, particularly those that provided structure, accessible resources, and instructional guidance. This is consistent with learner-centered approaches that emphasize learner needs, autonomy, active participation, and appropriate support [5]–[8].

This is significant because learner-centered online interaction is not simply the presence of a communication tool. Katsarou and Chatzipanagiotou [9] distinguish among learner-instructor, learner-learner, learner-content, and

learner-interface interaction. The quality and meaningfulness of these interactions can influence the learner's experience.

The finding therefore suggests that having a discussion forum does not necessarily guarantee a strong sense of connection. This is particularly evident in the completer reflection, where the learner described distance learning as less engaging because of limited face-to-face interaction with classmates and instructors.

Future offerings may therefore need to consider how forums are facilitated, how learners are encouraged to respond to one another, and how instructors create meaningful dialogue.

Meanwhile, Learner Support received the lowest mean among the major course categories at 4.50, although it remained within the "Strongly Agree" range. The course addressed practical support needs through regular LMS reminders and the availability of the Course Coordinator for consultation and clarification. However, the learner reflection suggests that support has a relational dimension that may not be fully captured by the evaluation score. The learner's concern about limited interaction indicates a desire for greater connection with classmates and instructors.

Thus, the findings suggest two forms of learner support: 1) Practical support (reminders, guidance, clarification, and course coordination) and 2) Relational support (interaction, instructor presence, peer connection, and social engagement). Both are relevant to learner-centered continuing education.

The difference between the favorable discussion forum rating and the learner's experience of limited interaction is particularly useful. It suggests that evaluating the availability of an interaction mechanism may not fully capture the quality of the interaction experienced by learners.

TABLE II. CCA&DRM EVALUATION RESULTS

Evaluation Category	Item Numbers	Mean Rating	Interpretation
Course Guide	1–6	4.67	Strongly Agree
Learning Resources	7–9	4.63	Strongly Agree
Learning Activities	10–14	4.55	Strongly Agree
Discussion Forums	15–18	4.63	Strongly Agree
Evaluation of Student Learning	19–24	4.61	Strongly Agree
Learner Support	25–27	4.5	Strongly Agree
Course Site	28–31	4.66	Strongly Agree
Course Coordinator	32–34	4.71	Strongly Agree
Timeliness	35a	4.63	Better
Relevance	35b	4.63	Better
Overall Quality	35c	4.63	Better
Overall Mean	Items 1–35	4.63	Strongly Agree / Highly Satisfactory

The overall mean of 4.63 indicates that learners generally perceived the course positively, with the Course Coordinator

receiving the highest rating at 4.71 and Learner Support receiving the lowest major-category rating at 4.50.

C. Insights from the Three Successive Offerings

The three course offerings provide the clearest quantitative evidence of changes in completion. As shown in Table III, the increase from 23% to 88% represents a 65-percentage-point increase in completion across the three reported offerings.

TABLE III. CCA&DRM COMPLETION RATES

Offering	Enrollees	Completers	Completion
2025-1	13	3	23%
2025-2	11	6	55%
2026-1	8	7	88%

The increase represents a substantial improvement in the proportion of enrolled learners who completed the course across the three offerings. While this trend is encouraging, the data do not establish that specific learner-centered strategies caused the improvement. The three iterations nevertheless provided useful insights for improving the course.

Learner retention was affected by workload, professional responsibilities, personal commitments, and time constraints. To address these challenges, the course used regular LMS reminders and provided access to the Course Coordinator for consultation. Learners also suggested adding more illustrations, visual aids, and practical examples to improve engagement and understanding.

The completer reflections provide additional insight into these course-level patterns. In particular, the available response shows that persistence may be supported by a combination of perceived relevance, investment in the course, formal recognition, and useful learning resources, while limited interaction may challenge continued participation.

The completion pattern should therefore be interpreted as an observed change across successive offerings rather than as evidence of a direct causal effect of course design. The value of examining the three offerings lies in identifying areas for continued course refinement and in considering completion data alongside learner feedback and course evaluation results.

Overall, the findings point to five design insights.

1. Design around learner goals.

The diverse reasons for enrollment suggest that professional continuing education should make the relevance of the course explicit from the beginning.

2. Connect learning with authentic contexts.

The major assignment required learners to develop a CCA/DRM plan relevant to their own development context. This provides a strong example of connecting course learning to real-world application.

3. Make learning resources accessible and varied.

Learning Resources received a high rating of 4.63, while the completer specifically identified learning materials, videos, and suggested readings as helpful.

4. Strengthen meaningful interaction and support.

Although Discussion Forums received 4.63, the completer's experience of limited interaction indicates that future offerings could strengthen peer and instructor engagement. Learner Support, at 4.50, was also the lowest-rated major category, providing another basis for improvement.

5. Recognize the value of completion.

The completer reflection also suggests that formal recognition may contribute to persistence. The learner identified the completion certificate as one factor that helped sustain participation and expressed interest in reinstating formal recognition and potentially having the course recognized for credit toward further UPOU studies.

Although this finding cannot be generalized from the available response, it points to recognition as a potentially meaningful element of professional continuing education and an area for further investigation.

D. Implications for Learner-Centered Course Design

The data suggest that learner-centered design supports adult learner motivation not through a single course feature but through the alignment of learner goals with the learning environment. Fig. 1 presents the proposed learner-centered design framework derived from the course data and learner reflection. The framework suggests that adult learner motivation begins with clear personal, academic, or professional goals and can be strengthened when course content is relevant and applicable to learners' contexts. Accessible learning resources, authentic activities, meaningful interaction, and appropriate support may further help sustain engagement and persistence. These elements reflect learner-centered approaches that emphasize learner needs, autonomy, active participation, and support [5]–[9].

The findings also suggest that learner-centered design should address both the practical and relational dimensions of online learning. Clear course structures, accessible resources, reminders, and responsive coordination can support learners in managing their responsibilities, while meaningful interaction with instructors and peers may strengthen connection and engagement.

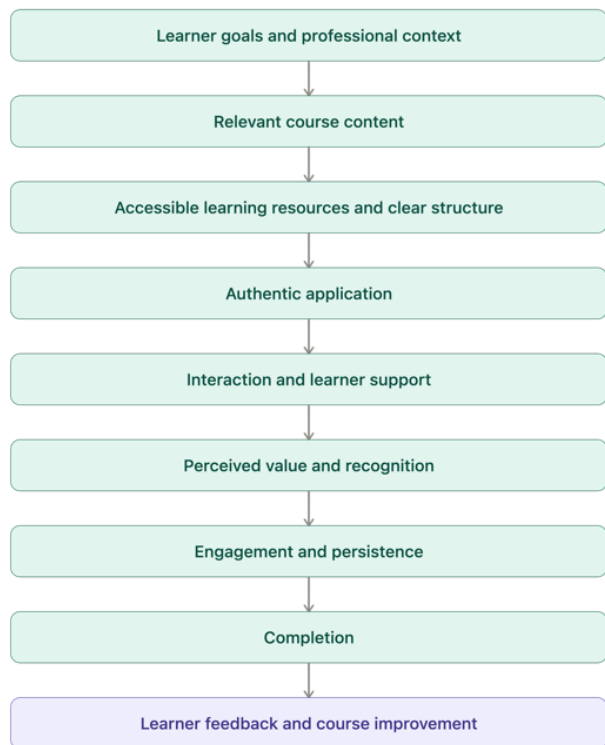


Fig. 1. Proposed learner-centered design framework for supporting adult learner motivation and persistence in pcontinuing education.

V. CONCLUSION

The study examined adult learner motivation in a professional continuing education course offered three times by the University of the Philippines Open University. The institutional data showed a diverse group of learners, varied academic and professional motivations, positive course evaluations, and higher completion rates across the three offerings.

The completer reflections provided further insight into the learner experience. The responses showed that learners were motivated by their academic or professional goals, while persistence was supported by the value of the course, useful learning resources, recognition, and their investment in the course. However, limited interaction with classmates and instructors was identified as a challenge to engagement.

These findings suggest that adult learner motivation is influenced not only by learners' personal goals but also by the learning environment. Relevant content, practical application, accessible resources, interaction, learner support, and recognition can help create a more motivating learning experience.

Completion increased from 23% to 55% and then 88% across the three offerings. While this improvement is encouraging, the data do not prove that learner-centered design caused the increase. Rather, the three offerings show the value of using learner feedback, course evaluation, and completion data to continuously improve the course.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of designing continuing education courses that are relevant, flexible, supportive, and connected to learners' real-world needs. The study also provides a practical perspective on learner-centered continuing education by showing how learner feedback and course data can guide course improvement. However, the findings from the two completer reflections are preliminary, and future studies should include more learner perspectives to better understand how learner-centered design supports motivation and persistence.

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