

# Alternative Teaching and Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

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Online learning is a common learning mode for adult learners, but this may not be the case for Malaysian full-time undergraduate learners before the COVID-19 pandemic. Synchronous online learning was introduced as a temporary solution to ensure continuity in learning during the 2020 Movement Control Order (MCO). However, the infrastructure, facilities, and course programs in most mainstream universities in Malaysia are not built for synchronous online learning during MCO. As a result, the effectiveness of synchronous online learning during MCO was affected, especially learners' engagement. Engagement is a very important component of effective learning. Nevertheless, promoting and sustaining a learner's engagement is not an easy task, especially in a synchronous online learning class during MCO. Therefore, how to promote learners' interest and sustain their engagement are two key concerns. This is because the nature of synchronous online learning requires learners to be more committed to independent learning (Kahn et al., 2017) and it also reduces the in-person interaction between learners and their instructors as well as with other fellow learners (Friedman, 2020; Dhawan, 2020). Learning from home has also posed some challenges to learners. Learners find it harder for them to focus on synchronous online learning during MCO due to distractions from uncondusive home environments, weak infrastructure (i.e., availability of electronic devices, poor Internet connection) and flexibility to social media (Alam 2020; Vardhaman, 2020; Friedman, 2020). In addition, the sudden migration from physical face-to-face classroom learning to synchronous online learning may also require new pedagogies to ensure learning effectiveness (Flynn-Wilson, 2021). Therefore, two underlying theories related to effective learning namely, engagement theory and interest theory were adopted to understand how to improve the effectiveness of synchronous online learning in the context of Malaysia's private higher learning institutions during MCO.

**Keywords:** Synchronous Online Learning, Engagement, Interest, Higher Learning Institutions