e-Learning in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions: Status, Trends, & Challenges

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# Content

## Foreword

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Chapter 2

e-Learning Policy in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions

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Introduction

A policy is a document which provides general guidelines for an institution or organization to achieve certain results, goals, or objectives. It is different from the processes, procedures, or protocols that are implemented to attain these results, goals, or objectives. Usually, a policy is approved by the executive members of an institution or organization and is carried out by officers and staff at the lower level. Policies are important because they provide guidelines to develop strategies and subsequently relevant action plans to achieve a result, aim, or objective. It focuses on action plans and promotes optimum use of manpower which indirectly prevents wastage. With the existence of a policy, objectives can be realized. In addition, the implementation process will be more structured and systematic, which ensures the effectiveness of the expected results or outcomes. To implement e-Learning in HEIs, e-Learning policies should be formulated.

This chapter will describe how e-Learning policies were formulated and implemented among Malaysian HEIs, how these policies were drafted, which bodies approved the policies, and how the policies were disseminated and promoted among the staff and students of the HEIs. This chapter will also describe the levels of support and commitment given by the various parties in the HEIs towards the e-Learning policy and the levels of success attained by the HEIs in implementing these e-Learning policies. This chapter also describes the level of awareness of the e-Learning policy among academic staff and their levels of compliance.
Methodology

Data were obtained from two types of respondents, e-Learning administrators and academic staff. A total of 26 e-Learning administrators responded to the HEIs Malaysian e-Learning Questionnaire (IT Manager), while a total of 1,635 academic staff completed the HEIs Malaysian e-Learning Questionnaire (Instructor).

There are 14 items from the Malaysian HEIs e-Learning Questionnaire (IT Manager) and 4 items from the Malaysian HEIs e-Learning Questionnaire (Instructor) that relate to e-Learning policy which will be discussed in this chapter.

The findings will be discussed based on two main perspectives: (i) status of implementation and (ii) trends of implementation.

Findings

Status of e-Learning Policy Implementation

Data obtained from the sample of academic staff showed some interesting findings. First, 80% of the sample surveyed indicated that e-Learning policies existed in their respective institutions (see Figure 2.1). Of these, most (92.5%) indicated that they were aware and knew about the e-Learning policy in their respective institutions (see Figure 2.2). According to them, information about the policy was mainly obtained from institutional websites (58%), circulars (57.4%), and formal training programmes conducted by their respective institutions.

In terms of compliance with the e-Learning policy, the data showed that 30.6% of academic staff complied with the policy fully, while 58.7% complied with some parts of the policy (see Figure 2.3). This shows that academic staff were not only aware of the existence of an e-Learning policy, but also carried out the e-Learning process in accordance with the guidelines set by the policy.

Out of the 26 HEIs involved in the study, only 38.5% or 10 HEIs have formulated and adopted the e-Learning policies. The remaining 61.5% or 16 HEIs still do not have any e-Learning policies (see Figure 2.4). For the HEIs having e-Learning policies, only the top management and representatives of the faculties/centres/departments were involved in formulating these policies, as shown in Figure 2.5. The data showed that none of the HEIs involved students and outsiders in the formulation of their e-Learning policies, who, by right, have vested interest in the implementation of these policies. The data also showed that in most cases, the e-Learning policies were approved by the Senate (60%) or the top management such as the Board of Council (40%), as shown in Figure 2.6.
Figure 2.1: Lecturers’ response on the existing e-Learning policy

Figure 2.2: Awareness of e-Learning policy among lecturers
Figure 2.3: Compliance with e-Learning policy among academic staff

Figure 2.4: Number/Percentage of HEIs having e-Learning policies
Figure 2.5: The stakeholders involved in formulating e-Learning policies

Figure 2.6: Approving bodies of e-Learning policies
Figure 2.7 shows the methods used to disseminate and inform the institution community about the e-Learning policy. Data showed that formal training programmes recorded the highest percentage (80%) followed by using the institution’s website (70%). Other methods include circulars or memos (60%), booklets or guidebooks (60%), and induction programmes (40%).

**Trends of e-Learning Policy Implementation**

Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show that almost all HEIs (90%) which already had e-Learning policies have their own implementation plans. Out of all the HEIs which had e-Learning policies, 70% make the use of e-Learning compulsory among their lecturers and students.

Nearly half of the HEIs (40%) had implemented their e-Learning policies in more than three years or between one to three years, while only two HEIs (20%) had implemented their e-Learning policies in less than a year (see Figure 2.10).
Figure 2.8: Number/Percentage of HEIs having e-Learning policy implementation plans

Figure 2.9: Number/Percentage of HEIs making e-Learning compulsory
Figure 2.10: Duration of e-Learning policy implementation

Figure 2.11 shows the percentage of components contained in e-Learning policies. Data showed that the least mentioned components in e-Learning policies were incentives, awards, and quality assurance. For most of the HEIs involved in this study (90%), e-Learning policies have been made part of their strategic plans (see Figure 2.12), while 70% make the e-Learning agenda a part of their KPIs (refer to Figure 2.13). Figure 2.14 shows the number of HEIs with clear e-Learning policy implementation plans. The data showed that out of the 10 HEIs having e-Learning policies, 4 do not have clear e-Learning policy implementation plans.
Figure 2.11: The components included in e-Learning policies

Figure 2.12: Number/Percentage of HEIs that make e-Learning policies a part of their institutional strategic plan
Figure 2.13: Number/Percentage of HEIs that make e-Learning policies a part of their institutional KPIs

Figure 2.14: Number/Percentage of HEIs with clear e-Learning policy implementation plan
In terms of e-Learning policy awareness, among the 10 HEIs with e-Learning policies, the e-Learning administrators believe that the level of awareness among the academic staff in their respective institutions is satisfactory. Six HEIs pointed out that the level of their e-Learning policy awareness among the academic staff was in the range of 76–100%; one HEI was in the range of 51–75%; three HEIs were at the 26–50% range, and the remaining four HEIs had the lowest level of awareness, i.e. 0-25% (see Figure 2.15).

In terms of success in implementing e-Learning, the data shows satisfactory results, as clearly shown in Figure 2.16. The figure shows that eight HEIs have successfully implemented their e-Learning plans, each achieving a success level of 51–100%, while 12 out of 20 HEIs stated a success level between 0 to 50% only so far.

Figure 2.17 shows the percentage of support of the various stakeholders in the implementation of e-Learning policy in Malaysian HEIs. In general, support from top management, faculty/school/department, and students was at the 76–100% level, while support from the lecturers were at the 25–50% level. This shows that the support from lecturers is less compared to the other stakeholders.

![Figure 2.15: Level of awareness of e-Learning policy among academic staff](image)
Implications of Findings and Proposed Improvements

Data obtained showed that the level of e-Learning policy formulation and implementation among HEIs is at low to moderate level with only 38% HEIs having e-Learning policies and are implementing them. These low levels are due to the lack of direction from central agencies such as MOHE in terms of e-Learning policy formulation and implementation. Formulation and
implementation of e-Learning policies are carried out by the HEIs in an ad-hoc manner, without any coordination and monitoring from MOHE. Thus, MOHE should provide a mechanism to ensure that all HEIs that do not have e-Learning policies to begin formulating policies and implementing them.

For those HEIs which already have e-Learning policies, it was found that their policies are not comprehensive enough because it did not take into account the needs of stakeholders who have a vested interest in the HEIs such as alumni, employers, and students. Therefore, it is important for MOHE to play its role in providing a comprehensive guideline on the formulation of e-Learning policies which involve all stakeholders, to HEIs that are yet to formulate their own policies.

For those HEIs that already have e-Learning policies, the implementation of their policies were found to be consistent and satisfactory. The policies were approved either by the Senate or the top management and were disseminated through various channels such as the institutions’ websites, brochures, training, and others. Implementation of the formulated policies were structured and included in the HEIs’ strategic plans and KPIs. The components included in the policies were found to be comprehensive and covered all levels, including the roles of top management, lecturers, students, the ICT Centre, copyright issues, training and others. In addition, the support and commitment given by the various stakeholders were found to be very good. The highest support was given by top management, followed by the faculties/centres and students, and finally, by the lecturers. The HEIs should take specific measures to ensure the commitment and involvement of the lecturers are at least as high as the commitment given by the students or higher. This is to ensure that students’ e-Learning expectations are fulfilled by the lecturers.

For HEIs with e-Learning policies, their e-Learning administrators believe that a high percentage of the academic staff are aware of the existence of the policies. More importantly, they also believe that the success of implementing e-Learning in the HEIs was at a satisfactory level. This clearly shows that with the presence of policies, e-Learning can be implemented effectively. Data obtained from academic staff related to awareness and effective implementation of e-Learning also supported the opinions given by the HEIs’ e-Learning administrators. Data obtained from academic staff showed that many lecturers are aware of the existence of the e-Learning policies and a high percentage of them were in compliance either fully or partly with the policies. The implication of these findings is that HEIs should formulate e-Learning policies which are transparent and known to the entire campus community and stakeholders in order to successfully implement their respective e-Learning agenda. Therefore, MOHE should coordinate the formulation and development of e-Learning policies for HEIs having no policies and make the implementation of these policies a benchmark for the success of e-Learning in Malaysian HEIs.

Conclusion

This chapter described the status and practices of e-Learning in Malaysian HEIs. Findings showed that e-Learning policies exist in some HEIs. However, the existence of e-Learning policies among HEIs is at a moderately low level. For the HEIs having e-Learning policies and which are implementing them, the process of formulating and implementing these policies were satisfactory. For these HEIs, data showed that the level of awareness of the e-Learning policy among the academic staff is high. The data also showed that there were high levels of success of implementing e-Learning among these HEIs. In relation to this, appropriate steps should be taken by MOHE to provide mechanisms and guidelines to encourage HEIs that have not established a policy to
formulate e-Learning policies and implement them. The establishment of a National Institute of e-Learning under the auspices of MOHE is the best step in providing guidance in the formulation of e-Learning policies and in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of these policies.