

Chapter 4

Creating and Maintaining Successful Online Learning Environments

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is about creating and maintaining successful online learning environments emphasizing on the online learning in higher education especially in Malaysia. This chapter will have several segments which will begin with the overview of online learning in Malaysia. It will explore the scenarios of using online learning way back in the year 2000 until recently. Then, some explanations about the Online Collaborative Learning Theory (OCL) may benefit in some ways. The chapter continues with further discussion on the key points such as the access

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and accessibility, the enhancement of online classroom engagement, building the online learning community and the personalization of learning experience to student tailored to their needs and pace. The future of online learning in Malaysia is highly promising, propelled by emerging trends and opportunities. As technology advances, online learning platforms in Malaysia are expected to integrate increasingly sophisticated tools and features, enhancing the educational experience and expanding opportunities for learners across the nation.

INTRODUCTION

An online learning environment is a dynamic space where learners can access resources, collaborate with peers, and interact with instructors from anywhere, anytime (Vanoostveen et al., 2019). Four key components of a successful online learning environment help educators achieve their online learning objectives. The four key components are accessibility (Seale & Cooper, 2010), engagement (Oncu & Cakir, 2011), community building (Misanchuk & Anderson, 2001) and personalisation (Ingkavara et al, 2022). The most significant challenge in online education is maintaining learner engagement over time (McKeithan et al, 2021). Effective online learning environments leverage interactive multimedia content, gamification elements, and collaborative activities to captivate learners' attention and foster active participation (Elmer & Dingli, 2024). Despite the physical distance between learners, a strong sense of community is essential to foster collaboration, peer support, and social interaction in online learning environments (Flaherty, 2022).

Online learning has been around in Malaysia since the late 20th century, the most notable expansion and advancement has taken place in the 21st century (Maria et al., 2018). With the beginning of distance education programs by universities like Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) (Lateh & Raman, 2005). These programs mostly used printed materials for learning resources and communication. In the early 2000s, online learning platforms and initiatives became more prevalent in Malaysia due to the accessibility of the Internet. During the mid-2000s, Open University Malaysia (OUM) became the first remote-learning university with an extensive choice of online degree programs (Chiam et al., 2011; Lee, 2020). The mission of OUM is to increase access to high-quality education and possibilities for lifelong learning, especially for adult learners. Its goal is to become Malaysia's and the region's leading provider of flexible learning. Operating

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