

Chapter 17

Enculturation of the Utilization of Learning Management System: The Experience of Universiti Putra Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) vision is to become a university with international repute. The Strategic Plan Document 2001- 2010 includes a goal for the university to be fully wired through ICT in enhancing research, extension work, professional service, strengthening teaching and learning environment and enhancing the culture of ICT in supporting teaching and learning. Two strategies were drawn; namely (i) implement the use of one learning management system (LMS) and (ii) enhance competency of academic staff in using the LMS. It has been a practice that each faculty decides on a platform for implementing e-Learning. However, the use of various LMSs had created difficulties in the sharing of integrated database, continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of the e-Learning system, and depository of e-Learning resources in the UPM's knowledge repository. This paper reports on UPM's experience in adapting the use of LMS from the early 1990s until today.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Achieving the standard of a world class university is a common concern among universities in developed and developing countries. Universiti Putra

Malaysia (UPM)'s vision is to become a university with international repute. From its humble beginnings in 1971, UPM has continued to develop and has become one of the distinguished universities in the region. Commencing as an agricultural-based university, UPM has expanded its frontiers in various

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disciplines such as engineering, medical sciences, pure sciences, economics, management, education, languages, communication and other fields. These fields have synergized and complemented the university's focal area, namely, agro-bio, which encompasses related areas of agriculture and science. The field of tropical agriculture has gained the most prominence. Today, the university has gained international reputation among international students and scholars from fifty nine different nations and has become an acclaimed international institution of higher learning in the region. The staff of UPM is committed towards excellence through the inculcation of quality culture in teaching, research and professional service, and to fulfill the expectations of its clients (<http://www.upm.edu.my/?kat=D&aktvt=>).

On October 11, 2006, four Malaysian universities were announced as research universities; Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaya and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. This was an initiative by Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) to appoint and to award recognition to universities who have met the benchmark set by MOHE. The vision of a research university expands existing philosophies and good practices to enhance overall education system and contribute to nation building. A research university seeks to actively participate in new adventures of ideas, experiment with innovative methods, and take intellectual initiatives to further discover and expand the frontiers of knowledge. The mission of a research university is to be an engine of growth of the nation where scholars and students exchange ideas as well as conduct research in a conducive environment that nurtures exploration and creativity discover knowledge and create wealth, leading towards an improved quality of life. The goals of the research university include to be a leader in innovation, to produce Nobel Prize winners, to produce world class research outputs, to be a center of excellence in prioritized areas of the nation, to generate high impact research publications, to secure research

funds from industry; to attract and to graduate students of high standard, and to attract the best brains for teaching and research.

With its current focus on expanding research work, innovations, and commercialization of research products, UPM takes several measures to ensure that the developments towards research do not in any way impede its reputation as an institution that strives on maintaining and enhancing good teaching. UPM strives to provide better access to lecture materials to on-campus students as well as the off-campus students or students enrolled for the distance learning programs. Thus, UPM shares the vision on the need to extend teaching and learning beyond the physical border of the university and the accessibility of conducting face-to-face teaching. The Strategic Plan Document 2001- 2010 (Revised 2007) (Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2008) includes the goal that the university is to be fully wired through information communication technology (ICT) in enhancing research, extension work, professional service, strengthening teaching and learning environment and enhancing the culture of ICT in supporting teaching and learning. To meet the objective pertaining to the enculturation of ICT in teaching and learning, two strategies were drawn; namely (i) implement the use of one learning management system (LMS) and (ii) enhance competency of academic staff in using the LMS. Actions to be taken include increasing the quality of training for both academic and non-academic staff and to reward staff who creates ICT innovations in e-Learning.

The University offers a wide range of programs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels across sixteen faculties and nine research institutes. Current enrolment of students for both undergraduates and postgraduates is close to 18,000 with a total of about 2500 academic staff. For a Malaysian university, this number of students is almost the largest. With such diverse offerings of programs to such a large number of students, the University ensure that the quality of education is maintained.

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