SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF E-TEACHING DEPENDS ON THE CAPABILITIES OF THE
LECTURERS AND TUTORS TO PLAN, IMPLEMENT, MANAGE AND SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING
ONLINE. LIKE MOST UNIVERSITIES, UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA AND UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL ARE
VERY CONCERNED WITH THE ABILITY OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN
STUDENTS’ ENGAGEMENT WITH E-LEARNING. BOTH UNIVERSITIES HAVE DEVELOPED TRAINING
PROGRAMMES TO ENSURE THAT THEIR ACADEMIC STAFF ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE NECESSARY
SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY IN THEIR FACE TO FACE TEACHING AND E-
TEACHING. THIS PRESENTATION AIMS TO SHARE EXPERIENCES OF BOTH INSTITUTIONS IN
PROVIDING SUPPORT AND TRAINING TO THEIR ACADEMIC STAFF IN THE USE OF E-TEACHING.
THIS PRESENTATION WILL ALSO EXAMINE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN HOW BOTH
INSTITUTIONS MANAGE ISSUES AND CONCERNS VOICED BY LECTURERS, PROVIDE APPROPRIATE
TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION. IT IS HOPE THAT THE LESSONS
LEARNED IN DEVELOPING LECTURERS FOR ONLINE TEACHING WILL BENEFIT BOTH INSTITUTIONS AND
OTHER INSTITUTIONS EMBARKING ON E-LEARNING.

1. INTRODUCTION

The success of e-learning depends very much on the acceptance of the lecturers and their
willingness to make e-learning a culture (Raja Hussain & Sulaiman, in press). A recent study
conducted by the National Defence University Malaysia found that the lecturers fail to
appreciate e-learning because their understanding of e-pedagogy is limited (Juwati, 2011).
Engaging lecturers with e-teaching is a social as well as a pedagogic one because it revolves
around developing different kinds of communication skills and becoming adept at using the
considerable array of available online communication tools (Cunningham, et al., 2010).
Lecturers need to experience the online learning themselves in order to appreciate the
environment and to build the confidence to support student learning online. For lecturers to
understand e-learning from the learner’s perspective there is a need for them to process their
e-learning experience (Kelly, 2009). This would involve being an online student themselves
so that they can appreciate the process that the students will have to go through in order to
learn in an online learning environment. What kind of support should then be provided to
lecturers to enable e-teaching?

As the director of a center responsible for development of academic staff in the area
of teaching and learning, the first author, during her sabbatical had an opportunity to examine
how the University of Bristol supports e-learning through staff development programmes.
This paper is based on the conversations between the first author and the second author. The aim is to share our experience in supporting e-learning in higher education through staff development.

2.0 PURPOSE

University of Bristol (UoB) like University of Malaya is a research university. Being research universities, both are very concerned with the quality of research affecting university standing in the world ranking. This paper is not concerned with how the universities are supporting research but is more interested in understanding how research universities are supporting teaching and learning specifically e-teaching and e-learning.

This paper is an attempt to compare the approaches taken by the two institutions in developing e-learning culture and in supporting the academic staff to use e-learning. The presentation is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the roles of the unit responsible for e-learning?
2. What kinds of support are made available for academic staff to develop knowledge and skills relevant to e-learning?
3. What types of training programmes are implemented by the unit?
4. What are the issues and concerns voiced by the academic staff related to e-learning?

The following sections will present the case for UM and UoB. The case for UM is based on the first author’s experience as the Director of Academic Development Centre (ADeC) who is also one of the designers and trainers for the e-learning support programmes. The second author is from the Education Support Unit (ESU) whose remit includes e-learning support, for the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE), Blackboard as well as other e-tools, and academic staff development.

3.0 THE CASE FOR UM

Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) was first introduced in 2003 to the UM lecturers involved in a project funded by the Danish Government on environmental management where a platform to exchange teaching materials among the participating universities was needed (Raja Hussain&Sulaiman, in press). In year 2007 Moodle was introduced as a new e-learning platform to lecturers in UM. For three years, interested lecturers were trained to use Moodle by ADeC, when finally in 2009 the Vice Chancellor decided that UM should only have a single Virtual Learning Environment, Moodle. Moodle at UM has since been re-branded as SPeCTRUM (Student-Powered e-Collaboration Transforming UM) to reflect the need for technology enhanced learning to support student centred teaching.

3.1.1 The roles of e-learning units

E-learning development and support in UM is tasked to two centres. Information Technology Centre (ITC) takes care of the technical support system. Academic Development Centre (ADeC) supports the pedagogical aspects of e-learning. ADeC works closely with ITC to draw the policy for e-learning and to support the e-learning committees on campus and at the faculties. Recently, UM made an announcement that the use of e-learning is one of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for academic staff. It is thus mandatory for all lecturers to use e-learning for at least one of their undergraduate courses. Each academic staff needs to show...
that they are practicing blended learning and at least one of their courses is active on the SPECTRUM. Therefore, the role of ADeC is to provide support and training to the academic staff on the use of SPECTRUM; develop e-learning culture in the university, and conduct research and development activities related to improving teaching and learning.

3.1.2 Support for academic staff

There are four types of support available to academic staff to ensure the e-learning culture is developed and that the implementation is successful.

*Infrastructure*

At the beginning of every semester ITC makes sure that all courses are readily available online for students and lecturers to use where the information on courses, instructors and students are taken automatically from the university’s database.

*Administrative*

The e-learning system SPECTRUM is fully integrated with student information system (ISIS) and human resource information system (HRIS). This would allow for one log in username and password for all the IT systems in UM.

*Technical*

Helpdesk (telephone and e-mail) is made available to all staff and students. E-learning clinics are for academic staff who faces problems to walk-in at the specified time and venue to receive help from the staff of e-learning unit.

*Pedagogical*

Beside workshops on e-learning pedagogy, user guides are also made available to academic staff to access on the SPECTRUM.

3.1.3 Training support programmes

Currently training on SPECTRUM is provided face to face using hands-on workshops conducted in the computer labs. Training programmes are designed for basic, intermediate and advanced levels. The training programmes are designed based on the first author’s experience developing PLEaSE (Personalized Learning Environment and Students Engagement) model for training undergraduate teacher trainees (Raja Hussain, 2011). In the model the role of lecturers changed from information providers to facilitators as the students become more engaged and independent.

*Basic level*

The purpose of the training at the basic level is to familiarize lecturers with the tools available in Moodle and to enable them to design the course based on sound e-learning pedagogy. It is crucial that the training will significantly develop their practice of blending technology with face-to-face teaching through the use of student centred approaches that lead to higher
achievement for students. Basic level training is given to lectures new to e-learning and the one-day training is also included in the New Lecturers Training Programme.

**Intermediate level**

At the intermediate level lecturers are guided to use the online quiz and the online group tools. The training they received will help them to support e-collaboration and to assess student learning online.

**Advance level**

At ADeC we believe that students should be empowered to develop their own personal learning spaces using tools of their choice. At the advanced level, lecturers are trained to support students in the use of e-learning using tools and devices accessible to them, preferably those that they own. For example in PLEaSE-ing with LMS workshop (Raja Maznah, Ng & Marsyitah, 2011) the lecturers are taught to apply learning theories and to design learning experiences based of Conrad and Donaldson’s (2004) students engagement model. In order to support independent learning ADeC has developed a guideline to PLEaSE so that lecturers can learn on their own to design courses based on crucial learning outcomes of their specific courses.

3.1.4 Issues and concerns voiced by the academic staff related to e-learning

Initially when e-learning was first introduced lecturers were not very supportive and very few were ready to adopt e-learning. Lecturers see the e-learning requirement as a new imposition on their already limited time for research and teaching. The responsibilities imposed upon lecturers are perceived to be heavy and demanding, especially when they worry about the copyright issues related to uploading of course materials.

4.0 THE CASE FOR UOB

UoB uses Blackboard as its institutional virtual learning environment (VLE).

4.1.1 The roles of e-learning units

The central unit responsible for e-learning is part of the Education Support Unit (ESU). The central team also liaises closely with e-learning colleagues based in Faculties. The ESU provides a range of support for Faculties, Schools and individual members of staff involved in teaching, supporting student learning, and assessment. These include: provision of academic staff development, including the Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (TLHE) programme, policy and guidance, quality assurance and enhancement, Programme and Unit approval and review, support for assessment (including the Code of Practice) and external examining, administration of unit and programme catalogues, and the National Student Survey.

The role of the e-learning team within the ESU is to provide a University-wide service to assist the adoption and embedding of appropriate technologies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of learning, teaching and assessment practices. The roles of staff within the e-learning team include:
- Providing advice on appropriate e-learning solutions for different needs
- Engaging staff in a range of training and staff development opportunities, including the e-learning module of the TLHE programme
- Collecting and disseminating examples of effective practice
- Participating in e-learning pilots and projects within and across faculties
- Providing advice on appropriate software tools and best practice
- Maintaining user guides for various e-learning tools and practices
- Evaluating software tools and systems (against identified requirements)
- Running a dedicated Blackboard helpdesk, and an e-learning helpdesk
- Advising on the design of surveys and suitable evaluation methods
- Supporting the development of e-learning related bids for external funding
- Providing an e-learning liaison for each faculty who acts as point of contact and can advise faculty learning and teaching groups
- Liaising with the academic e-Learning Advisors Network (eLAN) and Information Services (IS)
- Maintaining a mailing list to circulate information on events and the latest developments in e-learning
- Participating in a number of policy-making committees and groups across the University
- Horizon scanning and benchmarking against national and international trends
- Supporting the implementation of relevant strategies, e.g. Education Strategy
- Liaising with professional bodies such as the Higher Education Academy (HEA), the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and the Joint Information Services Committee (JISC)

Staff within the e-learning team have a number of specialisms, which include: effective use of VLEs, e-assessment, e-submission and e-marking, self and peer assessment, multimedia content, mobile learning, learning design, collaborative and reflective learning, blended learning, interactive classroom technologies, simulation, lecture capture, content management and development including OER, service management, project management, e-learning related bid writing, evaluation techniques and dissemination strategies.

4.1.2 Support for academic staff

UoB supports the development of its academic staff through various activities involving workshops (see 3.1.3) and other forms of support such as:
- individual and small group consultation and training
- a range of practice guides, how-to support materials, and case studies
- annual e-learning prize to showcase excellent and innovative practice
- annual learning and teaching exhibition
- Summer and Easter schools where staff can attend an intensive series of workshops
- Encouragement of a community of practice through networks such as the e-learning support network, and the e-learning advisors network
- Online and telephone helpdesk

4.1.3 Training support programmes
For the support programmes UoB provides different types of workshops and development programmes for lecturers to develop their knowledge and skills in e-learning. Such programmes are as follows:

- TLHE (Teaching and Learning in Higher Education) programme, which currently offers a one day e-learning module, but is being re-developed to include more embedded e-learning within the other core modules
- Central e-learning staff development programme, which includes a range of face-to-face workshops
- Blended workshops, incorporating 2 face-to-face sessions with online activities in between
- School and faculty based workshops, tailored to local needs
- Online tutorials and piloting of other individual e-learning packages such as the Epigeum materials

### 4.1.4 Issues and concerns voiced by the academic staff related to e-learning

Based on his personal observations and his dealings with academic colleagues, the second author feels that the following issues are of concern for the academic staff in UoB:

- Lack of time for staff development, keeping up-to-date, exploring, planning and implementing e-learning BUT
- At the same time staff like taking time out to go to f2f workshops as they feel it offers them space outside their normal busy working lives
- Some staff would find it useful to be able to see colleagues’ e-learning activities and resources, for example by being able to view their VLE courses, but this has not been easy to achieve in the past. It can be more easily addressed in future through use of the Blackboard Content and Community systems, which allow sharing of resources and more flexible online learning spaces
- There has been an increase in the use of e-submission recently, but many staff have concerns over the practicalities of e-marking, e.g. not wanting to mark large numbers of assignments electronically
- Frequently concerns are not “related to e-learning” but related to aspects of learning and teaching more generally, for example: our students say they want more and better feedback. How can technology help?

### 5.0 Similarities and differences between UoB and UM

Both universities are concerned with providing the best support that ensures excellent implementation of e-learning. They both have units that are responsible for e-learning. In UM, ADeC has a very small team that takes care of the e-learning support. UM team consists of an e-learning consultant and an assistant technical officer, and a technician in ITC who manages the server and takes care of the technical needs. ESU at UoB has a larger number of staff, currently 6 full-time and 3 part-time. Technical support is provided by IT services, whilst the ESU provides pedagogical support, including a helpdesk for staff using Blackboard and other e-learning tools, such as Questionmark Perception for e-assessment. They also
provide training and support in their areas of expertise, and also work closely with e-learning colleagues based locally in Faculties. Academicians are encouraged to use e-learning in their courses at UoB, on the other hand UM has made e-learning mandatory for lecturers to support at least the undergraduate programmes.

Both universities have designed training programmes that take into consideration staff levels of knowledge and experience in e-learning. Thus the design approach has followed instructional design principles with the aims of giving lecturers as much exposure as possible to the process of learning online and the experience of being online learners.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper has presented how two research universities are supporting the use of e-learning by their academic staff through the provision of staff development programmes. We have identified the roles of central units that support the implementation of e-learning and have presented the activities that both universities have conducted in order to engage academic staff in e-learning. In the effort to transform teaching and learning and to overcome the issues and concerns related to full adoption of e-learning, we are learning from each other and we hope to generate more discussions and sharing of best practices with other higher institutions. We foresee that technology will continue to become more embedded in mainstream teaching and learning practice in a blended approach, and also there will be an increase in primarily online courses. Thus, there is a need to develop strategic approaches to the integration of technology via a more structured curriculum review and development (compared to more generally ad hoc approaches in the past, based on enthusiastic individuals or early adopters). Both universities are preparing for the more widespread use of mobile technology and cloud-based services. It is our hope that this sharing will benefit other universities planning to integrate technology into teaching and learning.

References


