

LEARNING CURVE



**“Some people ask why give free education resources? It is a marketing strategy. The more I offer for free, the more leverage for me, UKM and the country. For an academician, being relevant, referred and respected is traditionally done through publication. But now social media is good way of leveraging expertise because an online search for an expert in a certain discipline will generate names.”**

Professor Datuk Dr Mohamed Amin Embi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Centre for Teaching and Learning director

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**O**PEN education resources provided in the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) format have the potential to elevate experts from local universities to the forefront of the international education scene — with a high possibility of triggering interest in making the tertiary institutions top choices, not only among local but also students from around the world.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Director of Teaching and Learning Professor Datuk Dr Mohamed Amin Embi knows this first-hand.

His first professional MOOC development, known as Rethinking Teaching: Redesigning Learning (RTRL) and made available for free since last August, has (as at print time) attracted 2,396 participants ranging from professors and educators to parents from 90 countries.

Equivalent to a three-credit hours course offered in a self-paced mode over 25 weeks, RTRL course is designed to facilitate participants to redefine their perception of teaching and redesign their students' learning experiences to meet the needs of 21st century education.

Mohamed Amin's engaging "minds-on" (modules one-six) and "hands-on" (modules seven-12) content has managed to not only garner the interest of course participants but also made him one of the 2016 Open Education Award Winners: Site & Course (under the Open MOOC category) at the Open Education Global Conference 2016 in Kraków, Poland last month.

Organised by the US-headquartered Open Education Consortium (a global network of educational institutions, individuals and organisations), the conference offers the annual opportunity for researchers, practi-

# Creating access to quality education

**FREE RESOURCES:** Massive Open Online Courses are changing the education landscape

tioners, policy makers and educators to explore open education and its impact worldwide.

Mohamed Amin said: "The learning is very interesting in RTRL. My students and I have never met but the course is ongoing. I know each and everyone of my students because we interact online. Classes run with students studying at all times of the day. When I'm online, the students can see me and engage in discussions. I try to reply to questions and comments within 24 hours."

The uniqueness of RTRL lies in the fact that he does not create new content but curate content to deliver new meaning in his area of expertise, e-learning and innovative teaching.

"I find the best online videos by professors all around the world so there is variation in content and students eagerly anticipate the following week's content. I am in the background as the guide and students learn in an exploratory manner. I use micro learning — byte-size learning. Three-minute videos are followed by discussions or short activities, an approach which make people hungry for knowledge," he added.

Also one of two educators who won the Educator Award under the Individual Categories at the conference,

Mohamed Amin is the first Malaysian and Asian to be given the honour. He believes making education available, accessible, modifiable and free goes a long way in assisting individuals and societies to solve present challenges and seize opportunities of the future.

"The idea of free and open sharing in education is not new. But it is not something that is being picked up in Malaysia. I have been advocating open education resources since I returned to the country after I completed my post-graduate studies in 1996. Educators on our side of the world don't often offer free resources. Knowledge is power. If we share, our views can impact others.

"Some people ask why give free education resources? It is a marketing strategy. The more I offer for free, the more leverage for me, UKM and the country. For the past two years, I have received a lot of invitations from all over the world. For an academician, being relevant, referred and respected is traditionally done through publication. But now social media is good way of leveraging expertise because an online search for an expert in a certain discipline will generate names."

Mohamed Amin has published 35 e-books related to e-Learning, Web 2.0 and Blended/Flipped Learning in addition to 85 presentations on Web 2.0 tools. These open education resources have recorded more than 1.3 million visits since 2011. His most impactful contribution is the e-book series, *Web 2.0 Tools in Education Series*, with 16 titles in English and 10 titles in the Malay language. All the e-books in this series have been widely used as reference guides in professional development training at all 20 public universities and some private universities in Malaysia.

He has also developed and published a free mobile application on how to use select Web 2.0 Tools in teaching and learning known as Jit2U (Just-in-time Training 2U). According to Google Analytics, Jit2U has been accessed by educators from more than

113 countries.

"In the early days, I put my resources in virtual centres which garnered minimal response. Then I published *Web 2.0 Tools in Education Series* in the social media publication, *Scribd*. In three months, some 60,000 subscribers used my material.

"The MOOC format will change the landscape of education. Previously, people used to think quality education is only related to big universities such as MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and the like. It is not necessarily so now. With MOOC, UKM is also offering quality education that is available online. By offering MOOCs for free, global consumers have an idea of Malaysian universities and the Higher Education Ministry is leveraging on this. Foreign students may enrol in campuses here."

With the ministry's efforts to put in place a guideline for credit recognition and transfer for MOOCs, Mohamed Amin said the stage is set for flexible learning where students can have their MOOCs credits taken into account for the certificates, diploma and degree qualifications. This will make education in Malaysia more flexible, open and attractive to local as well as foreign students.

As for his work in UKM, Mohamed Amin said the Centre for Teaching and Learning is assisting 60 lecturers to offer MOOCs by September. "UKM and platform provider OpenLearning are co-organising a MOOCs design competition for our teaching staff. Going into MOOCs will not only take UKM but also Malaysia into the international level."

A professor at UKM's Faculty of Education, Mohamed Amin is also president of Mobile Learning Association of Malaysia. His accolades include the ISESCO Prize for Science & Technology 2010 (Technology), National Academic Award 2006 (Teaching Innovation), Malay Outstanding Award 2008 (Education) and Malaysia Achievement Award 2012 (Outstanding Achievements in Education Category).



Rethinking Teaching: Redesigning Learning

Status: Self-paced

Duration: 25 Weeks

Students: 2374



Join the course

Rethinking Teaching: Redesigning Learning website