



CTEF - IPPTN Special Series on SDG4: Planning for Flexible Learning Pathways in Higher Education: Part 04

Flexible Learning Pathways in Malaysia:

The Case Study, Recommendations and Way Forward

Flexible learning pathways in Malaysia: The summary of findings

The research main highlights are on the in-depth case study on policies and practices that support FLPs in Malaysia. It involved interviews and focus group discussions with 49 participants/respondents representing national level and institutional level – public university and private university. The findings were complemented by a review of relevant national projects, legislative documents, and national statistical database.

The findings of the research on FLPs in Malaysia may be summarised as follow:

- **One**, the original national policy on lifelong learning for human resource development has evolved to focus on access to higher education for equity groups;
- **Two**, national stakeholders were of the opinion that the national policy on lifelong learning and FLPs as implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education has increased access to higher education among equity groups;
- **Three**, at the institutional level, FLPs implementation and practice were primarily about compliance with little opportunity for creativity, resulting in tensions between national stakeholders and institutions as well as within institutions; and
- **Four**, the fact that at both national and institutional levels only qualitative data were available for analysis means that the benefits of FLPs for equity groups remain not fully explored.

Implementation of the FLPs aspect (National perspectives)	Implementation of the FLPs aspect (Institutional perspectives)	
	Public University	Private University
<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear mandate from the ministry through MQA top-down approaches. • Rationale for the adoption of FLPs in public and private universities. <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness and understanding of policy intent – mid-level implementers. • Lack of awareness among target groups, especially among equity groups. • Unpreparedness in universities to implement FLPs. • Lack of knowledge and local expertise to develop the instrument. • Issues regarding monitoring of implementation. • Non-standardised data on disadvantage groups. • Lack of support from employers. 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit exemptions for students – since credit transfer not applicable to all the subjects offered. • Second chance for students to higher education. <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance matters related to non-traditional students. • Review of documentation – time factor. • Internal issues on FLPs – level of comfort to implement FLPs. 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for non-traditional learners. <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suboptimal performance – quality of students below the acceptable standard or level. • Maximising internal resources for private HEIs that already limited in resources. • Issues on students’ commitment and perseverance – especially among non-traditional learners.

Recommendations

The synthesis of the findings of this study is the basis for the recommendations to improve policies, implementation, and monitoring of FLPs for the benefit of equity groups. In the effort to make FLPs as the backbone of increasing access to higher education and subsequent progression, the following recommendations are put forward:

- (1) **A national policy framework on integrated data management systems**
Data should consist details of the students in HEIs and disadvantaged groups.
- (2) **A dedicated entity focusing on equity groups within the MoHE**
The entity must link to the institutional level for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of policy objectives.
- (3) **Flexible learning support systems for disadvantaged groups**
Instruments and practices of FLPs at the institutional level need to cater to the different needs of people with disabilities (PWD) and other disadvantaged groups.
- (4) **Pathways for getting into HEIs**
Creating innovative instrument for PWD groups entering HEIs through alternative admission pathways like the APEL (A).
- (5) **Pathways for getting through the education system**
Improving teaching and learning strategies to ensure inclusive and equitable access to higher education for all.
- (6) **Pathways for getting out of HEIs and joint labour sectors**
Focus should be on the PWD groups and the job market, since no data showing how they have fared in this area.

Way Forward: International Online Policy Forum on FLPs in Higher Education, 6 – 8 July 2021

The findings of the research on SDGs 4: Planning for flexible learning pathways in higher education in the eight countries - Chile, Finland, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Morocco, South Africa, and United Kingdom, will be deliberated in a three-day online International Policy Forum (IPF) 2021. This unique event aimed to create a dialogue between

policy makers, researchers, and practitioners with these intention outcomes:

- ⇒ **Shared evidence** on good practices, innovative features, and institutional experiences in flexible learning pathways;
- ⇒ **Enhanced dialogue** between national and institutional decision-makers, representatives of national quality assurance agencies, institutional policy makers, and researchers;
- ⇒ **Increased consensus** on the way forward for flexible learning pathways as a mean to respond to diverse learner needs and skill requirements.

The Forum will be organised jointly by IIEP-UNESCO and the Malaysian counterparts – Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF), Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) under Department of Higher Education (JPT), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO. For more information and updates please visit the IIEP-UNESCO IPF2021 website, <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/international-policy-forum-flexible-learning-pathways-higher-education-13759>

Bibliography

Morshidi, S. et. al.. (2021). *Flexible Learning Pathways in Malaysian Higher Education: Balancing Human Resource Development and Equity Groups*. Report for the International Institute for Educational Planning – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Research on SDG4: Planning for Higher Education. Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF). <https://www.ctef.com.my/our-work/publications>

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