

Advancing Teaching Excellence in the Era of Education 5.0: Learner-Driven Pedagogy, Technology Integration and Research-Informed Practice

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Abstract: *The rapid advancement of Industry 4.0 technologies has reshaped higher education, requiring teaching excellence to be redefined in the era of Education 5.0. This paper explores how Malaysian higher education can advance teaching excellence by embedding learner-centred pedagogy within technology-enhanced learning environments. It analyses how artificial intelligence (AI), big data, gamification and digital platforms enable interactive, personalised, and inclusive learning, while also addressing challenges such as the digital divide, cybersecurity and faculty readiness. The paper further highlights the importance of collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches, supported by academic research and policy frameworks such as the Higher Education Plan 2025–2035 and Education 5.0@UiTM. The findings argue that technology in learning is not merely a tool for content delivery but a transformative enabler of engagement, employability and ethical resilience. By integrating pedagogy, technology and research, higher education institutions can build adaptive ecosystems that prepare graduates for dynamic and uncertain futures.*

Keywords: *AI Education, Cybersecurity, Education 5.0, Gamification, Learner-Centred Pedagogy*

1. INTRODUCTION

The global landscape of higher education is rapidly changing under the dual influence of Industry 4.0 and Education 5.0. Industry 4.0, characterised by artificial intelligence (AI), big data, robotics and the Internet of Things (IoT), has redefined how societies work and interact. Education, as a critical driver of socio-economic progress, is essential to adapting to this technological revolution by producing graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also adaptable, creative, and digitally literate (Schwab, 2017). Concurrently, Education 5.0 has emerged as a paradigm that emphasises human-centric, values-driven learning where technology serves as a facilitator rather than a substitute for human engagement (UiTM, 2019). Building on UiTM's Education 5.0 framework, which highlights five key pillars: Coherent and Relevant Curriculum, Innovative Delivery and Assessment, Meaningful Learning Experience, Transformative Learning Environment, and Inspiring Educators, teaching excellence in Malaysian higher education can be aligned with these humanised, values-based educational principles.

For Malaysia, this transformation is particularly significant. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has outlined ambitious reforms in the draft Higher Education Plan 2025–2035, which prioritises graduate employability, curriculum modernisation and digitalisation of learning environments. Similarly, the 13th Malaysia Plan allocates substantial resources for educational transformation, signalling the centrality of higher education in national development (Economic Planning Unit, 2025). In this context, teaching excellence can no longer be defined solely by content delivery or traditional performance indicators. Instead, it must be reimagined as a holistic practice encompassing learner-centred pedagogy, technology-enhanced learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and research-informed teaching.

This paper situates itself at the intersection of policy, pedagogy and technology. It advances the argument that teaching excellence in the era of Education 5.0 requires universities and academics to (1) adopt learner-driven pedagogical approaches, (2) leverage technology for interactive and equitable learning experiences, (3) promote collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching, and (4) strengthen the role of research in enhancing teaching quality. Each of

these dimensions will be explored in detail, with specific emphasis on the Malaysian higher education context. The paper also discusses the challenges of implementation, particularly the digital divide, uneven institutional capacity and the need for sustained professional development among educators.

By reframing higher education through these lenses, Malaysia can position itself not merely as a respondent to global trends but as a leader in shaping adaptive, inclusive and future-ready education ecosystems. The sections that follow examine how these priorities can be realised and integrated within higher education institutions, drawing on both national policy frameworks and international best practices.

2. LEARNER-CENTRED PEDAGOGY FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

The pursuit of teaching excellence in the era of Education 5.0 begins with a fundamental reorientation from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy. Traditional models of higher education, often characterised by lecture-heavy content delivery and examination-driven assessment, are increasingly inadequate in preparing graduates for complex and rapidly evolving labour markets. Learner-centred pedagogy, by contrast, prioritises active engagement, autonomy and co-construction of knowledge, ensuring that learners play an active role in shaping their educational experiences (Weimer, 2013).

2.1 RATIONALE FOR LEARNER-CENTRED PEDAGOGY

Learner-driven approaches are supported by evidence that students who actively engage with content, collaborate with peers, and apply their learning in authentic contexts achieve deeper understanding and longer-term retention (Prince, 2004). In Malaysia, this emphasis aligns with national policy objectives, such as the Higher Education Plan 2025–2035, which identifies graduate employability, critical thinking, and innovation as central outcomes (MOHE, 2025). Aligning pedagogy with these outcomes requires a redesign of curricula to emphasise competencies such as problem-solving, digital literacy, ethical reasoning, and teamwork. UiTM's educator acceptance study

(Mohd Salleh et al., 2020) indicates that lecturers across 26 faculties and 35 campuses show strong understanding and positive acceptance of the Education 5.0@UiTM framework, reflecting institutional readiness for learner-driven and personalised education.

2.2 PRINCIPLES OF LEARNER-CENTRED PEDAGOGY

Key principles of learner-centred pedagogy include:

- **Active learning:** Activities such as case studies, simulations, flipped classrooms, and problem-based learning empower students to construct knowledge actively.
- **Personalised pathways:** Flexible curricula that allow learners to choose modules, stack micro-credentials or integrate experiential learning promote ownership of the learning process.
- **Authentic assessment:** Assessment methods that mirror real-world tasks, such as portfolios, project reports, design prototypes and collaborative challenges, may enhance the transferability of skills.
- **Reflective practice:** Encouraging students to reflect on their learning processes strengthens metacognition and self-directed learning capacities.

These principles resonate with Education 5.0's call to "liberate learning from the constraints of academic weeks and places," promoting seamless, self-directed and meaningful learning experiences (UiTM, 2019).

2.3 PEDAGOGICAL MODELS AND PRACTICES IN MALAYSIA

Several Malaysian universities have begun experimenting with learner-centred pedagogies. For instance, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) has pioneered Education 5.0@UiTM, an initiative that blends values-driven education with learner empowerment, emphasising the cultivation of both knowledge and character (UiTM, 2019). Similarly, Universiti Malaya has implemented interdisciplinary capstone projects that place students in real-world problem-solving contexts with industry partners (UM, 2022). These initiatives signal a growing recognition that teaching excellence must be redefined in terms of the learner's experience and outcomes.

2.4 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

While the rationale for learner-centred pedagogy is compelling, its implementation faces challenges. Academics trained in traditional methods may lack familiarity with active learning strategies, while students accustomed to rote learning may initially resist the shift toward autonomy. Institutional barriers, such as rigid curriculum structures and performance metrics tied to examination results, further impede transformation. Nonetheless, opportunities abound: national policies encourage modular and flexible learning pathways, industry partners are increasingly eager to co-develop curricula, and digital tools provide platforms for interactive and collaborative learning.

2.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

By embedding learner-centred pedagogy into higher education, teaching excellence becomes more than a measure of academic expertise; it becomes a dynamic practice of facilitation, mentoring and co-learning. Academics serve as guides and coaches, cultivating learning environments in which students are active agents rather than passive recipients. In the Malaysian context, this approach resonates with the cultural and policy emphasis on lifelong learning, inclusivity and employability. The result is a pedagogy that not only improves learning outcomes but also equips graduates with the adaptability and resilience required in an unpredictable future.

3. TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING AND INDUSTRY 4.0 TOOLS

Technological transformation is reshaping higher education at an unprecedented scale. The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI), big data, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics and immersive technologies represents both an opportunity and an obligation for universities. In the context of teaching excellence, technology-enhanced learning offers new ways to personalise education, engage learners interactively and ensure that higher education remains relevant to rapidly evolving professional landscapes (Bond et al., 2020).

3.1 TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENABLER OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING

Digital platforms can transform passive learning environments into interactive, engaging experiences. Video-based learning, interactive simulations, gamification elements and adaptive quizzes enable students to learn in ways that align with their cognitive preferences and pace (Bolliger et al., 2010). In Malaysia, universities increasingly deploy learning management systems (LMS) such as Moodle and Canvas to host blended and online courses. These systems are augmented with multimedia content, peer discussion forums, and analytics tools that allow instructors to track learner progress and intervene as needed. UiTM's implementation of smart classrooms, immersive learning spaces and data analytics labs exemplifies Education 5.0@UiTM's commitment to humanising technology through innovative yet ethical delivery systems (Mohd Salleh et al., 2020).

3.2 PERSONALISATION THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DATA ANALYTICS

AI-driven platforms provide adaptive learning experiences by analysing student performance data and tailoring content accordingly. For instance, intelligent tutoring systems can adjust the difficulty level of tasks in real time, while chatbots can support learners by answering frequently asked questions. The use of big data analytics further enables institutions to identify patterns in student engagement and predict attrition risks, allowing timely interventions (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Such innovations are integral to Education 5.0, where technology facilitates personalised, learner-driven pathways.

3.3 GAMIFICATION AND MOTIVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Gamification has emerged as a powerful strategy to enhance student motivation and participation. By incorporating game mechanics such as badges, leaderboards and progress tracking into learning platforms, educators can encourage sustained engagement and persistence (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). More importantly, gamification supports the learner-centred paradigm by making education more participatory and enjoyable without sacrificing academic rigour.

3.4 CYBERSECURITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The widespread adoption of digital tools also raises important ethical and security concerns. As universities transition to cloud services, digital assessments and AI-powered platforms, they must safeguard sensitive student and research data against cyber threats (Ahmad et al., 2014). Cybersecurity policies, routine audits and staff training are therefore essential components of any digitalisation strategy. Additionally, ethical issues surrounding AI, such as algorithmic bias, transparency and the potential misuse of student data, may require clear regulatory frameworks and institutional accountability. In this respect, the Malaysian government's increasing attention to data governance complements the broader higher education transformation agenda.

3.5 EDUCATION 5.0 AS A FRAMEWORK FOR TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

The Education 5.0@UiTM initiative illustrates how universities can strategically integrate technology while preserving humanistic and ethical dimensions of education (UiTM, 2019). This framework advocates for holistic learning that develops not only digital competencies but also moral and social values. In practice, Education 5.0 encourages the integration of AI, robotics and IoT into teaching while ensuring that such tools support, rather than replace, meaningful human interactions. The result is a blended ecosystem in which technology facilitates creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. The framework positions technology as an enabler of empathy and empowerment, ensuring that digital transformation aligns with human values rather than replacing human interaction.

3.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Technology-enhanced learning does not replace the role of academics but expands their capacity to design inclusive, interactive and future-oriented educational experiences. The challenge lies in ensuring equitable access: without reliable connectivity, adequate devices and digital literacy training, technology risks deepening existing inequalities. Hence, teaching excellence in the digital era requires both innovative pedagogy and structural commitments to

inclusivity, security and ethics. When appropriately implemented, technology becomes not only a medium of instruction but also a catalyst for learner empowerment and institutional transformation.

4. COLLABORATIVE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING MODELS

Collaboration and interdisciplinarity are at the heart of teaching excellence in the 21st century. Complex societal problems, from climate change to cybersecurity, cannot be solved within the confines of a single discipline. Universities must therefore foster environments where learners, educators and industry partners collaborate across boundaries to generate innovative solutions. This orientation reflects the “Transformative Learning Environment” pillar of Education 5.0@UiTM, which promotes collaboration across faculties, disciplines, and industries to cultivate holistic and employable graduates.

4.1 THE RATIONALE FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Collaborative learning emphasises peer-to-peer interaction, shared problem-solving and the co-construction of knowledge. Research shows that collaborative approaches enhance critical thinking, retention and communication skills while preparing students for teamwork in professional environments (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). For Malaysia, where national policy highlights employability and innovation, collaborative learning aligns directly with labour market demands for adaptable graduates.

4.2 INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING AND CURRICULUM DESIGN

Interdisciplinary approaches encourage students to view problems holistically. Malaysian universities are increasingly embedding interdisciplinary modules, such as environmental sustainability courses that draw on engineering, business and social sciences. These approaches echo the goals of Education 5.0, which situates learning at the nexus of knowledge, values and societal relevance (UiTM, 2019). By involving multiple faculties and industry stakeholders in curriculum design, universities can expose students to diverse perspectives while cultivating the ability to integrate knowledge across fields.

4.3 GLOBAL AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS IN COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

Technology-enhanced learning environments enable collaboration across borders. Virtual exchanges, joint online courses and industry-sponsored projects allow Malaysian students to engage with peers and experts globally. For example, collaborative online international learning (COIL) initiatives connect local institutions with international partners, fostering cross-cultural competence (Rubin, 2016). Similarly, partnerships with industry ensure that academic projects address real-world challenges, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.

4.4 INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite clear benefits, implementing collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching faces obstacles. Institutional silos, rigid faculty structures and limited incentives for cross-disciplinary work often hinder innovation. Faculty members may also lack experience in facilitating group-based learning or co-teaching across disciplines. However, opportunities are expanding: policy frameworks encourage university–industry partnerships, while digital platforms reduce logistical barriers to collaboration. The key lies in providing adequate institutional support, including recognition of interdisciplinary teaching in promotion criteria and funding for collaborative projects.

4.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches redefine teaching excellence as a collective endeavour. The “Inspiring Educators” pillar of Education 5.0@UiTM underscores this collective ethos, positioning educators as mentors and co-learners who model adaptability and empathy. Rather than individual instructors delivering isolated content, teaching excellence emerges through networks of learners, academics and external stakeholders working toward shared goals. This approach nurtures not only knowledge but also soft skills

such as leadership, empathy and cultural competence. By institutionalising collaborative practices, Malaysian higher education can prepare graduates to navigate and shape interconnected global societies.

5. THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN ENHANCING TEACHING

Academic research plays a vital role in advancing teaching excellence. Beyond producing new knowledge, research informs evidence-based pedagogical practices, drives innovation in curriculum design and evaluates the impact of educational reforms. In an era where accountability and quality assurance are paramount, research ensures that teaching practices are not only innovative but also effective.

5.1 RESEARCH-INFORMED PEDAGOGY

Research provides the evidence base for effective teaching strategies. Studies in cognitive psychology and educational technology, for instance, have revealed how students learn best in active, socially mediated and digitally enhanced contexts (Freeman et al., 2014). By embedding research findings into classroom practice, educators can adopt strategies proven to improve outcomes.

5.2 PRACTITIONER RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SOTL)

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) encourages educators to systematically investigate their own practice. In Malaysia, universities are increasingly promoting SoTL projects by providing grants to lecturers to experiment with new pedagogies and publish their findings. This has created a virtuous cycle in which teaching innovations are tested, refined, and disseminated across the sector. Education 5.0@UiTM formally integrates SoTL into its transformation agenda, supporting lecturers in conducting classroom-based research and embedding findings into course design.

5.3 INTERDISCIPLINARY AND APPLIED RESEARCH FOR EDUCATION 5.0

Research in the context of Education 5.0 goes beyond pedagogy to explore how emerging technologies and values-based frameworks can be integrated into higher education. Studies on gamification, AI ethics, and digital inclusivity directly contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Applied research projects, often in collaboration with industry, also ensure that university teaching aligns with evolving workforce needs.

5.4 CHALLENGES IN LINKING RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Despite its potential, integrating research into teaching is not straightforward. Heavy teaching loads, limited funding and publication pressures often prevent academics from engaging deeply in pedagogical research. Additionally, institutional cultures that prioritise research outputs over teaching innovation may discourage investment in SoTL. Addressing these challenges requires policies that reward pedagogical research and recognise teaching excellence on par with disciplinary research achievements.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

By grounding teaching in research, universities ensure that pedagogical decisions are informed, intentional and impactful. This not only enhances student learning outcomes but also elevates the status of teaching within academic careers. Research-informed teaching excellence thus represents a synergy of scholarship, practice and innovation that is essential for higher education in the era of Education 5.0.

6. POLICY, IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Policies provide the structural backbone for advancing teaching excellence. In Malaysia, the Higher Education Plan 2025–2035 and the 13th Malaysia Plan underscore the government’s commitment to modernising curricula, expanding digital infrastructure and supporting lifelong learning. However, translating these aspirations into reality requires overcoming significant implementation challenges.

6.1 POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Current policies emphasise graduate employability, industry partnerships and digitalisation as key drivers of higher education reform. These align well with the principles of learner-centred pedagogy, technology integration and collaborative teaching. Policy initiatives also encourage modular and flexible learning pathways, such as micro-credentials and recognition of prior learning, which expand access and inclusivity (MOHE, 2025).

6.2 IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

A descriptive analysis by Mohd Salleh et al. (2020) showed that while UiTM educators largely accept Education 5.0’s strategic pillars, challenges persist due to infrastructure gaps, uneven digital readiness and entrenched assessment norms.

Several challenges threaten to slow progress:

- Digital divide: Unequal access to devices and internet connectivity disproportionately affects rural and underserved students.
- Capacity gaps: Not all institutions possess the infrastructure or expertise required for technology-enhanced learning.
- Faculty readiness: Many academics lack training in learner-centred pedagogy and digital pedagogy.
- Institutional inertia: Bureaucratic structures and traditional performance indicators can stifle innovation.

6.3 SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

Effective implementation requires comprehensive support systems. For students, this includes financial aid, device loans, mental health services and academic coaching. For staff, continuous professional development in pedagogy and technology is essential, along with policies that promote wellbeing and recognise teaching excellence. Institutional support for teaching innovation, such as learning design centres and seed funding for pedagogical pilots, further strengthens reform efforts.

6.4 MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Transparent monitoring mechanisms are critical to ensure that reforms achieve intended outcomes. Universities should track graduate employability, digital participation and student satisfaction as key performance indicators. Independent evaluations and regular policy reviews will help identify gaps and guide course corrections.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

Ultimately, teaching excellence in Malaysia depends on a supportive ecosystem that integrates policy intent with institutional capacity and individual commitment. Policies must be matched with resources, training and accountability to create conditions in which learner-centred, technology-enhanced and research-informed teaching can flourish. Education 5.0's guiding values of Adab (courtesy) and Amanah (trust) remind policymakers that humanising education requires empathy, integrity and accountability in implementation.

7. CONCLUSION

Teaching excellence in the era of Education 5.0 requires a fundamental paradigm shift in higher education. This paper has argued that excellence is best achieved by embedding learner-centred pedagogy, leveraging technology for interactive and inclusive learning, fostering collaborative and interdisciplinary models and grounding teaching in research-informed practice. In the Malaysian context, these transformations align with national policy frameworks such as the Higher Education Plan 2025–2035 and Education 5.0@UiTM, both of which aim to produce graduates who are skilled, adaptable, ethical and industry-ready. UiTM's Education 5.0@UiTM provides a practical blueprint for achieving this goal through its five pillars that integrate technological fluency with human-centred values. However, the success of these initiatives depends on addressing critical structural challenges such as the digital divide, uneven institutional capacity and varying levels of faculty readiness. If these challenges are effectively managed, Malaysian higher education can emerge as a regional leader in shaping adaptive, inclusive and future-ready learning ecosystems. Teaching excellence will no longer be confined to classroom performance; it will instead reflect universities' capacity to prepare graduates who can thrive and lead in a rapidly changing world.

8. SUGGESTIONS

This paper proposes the following suggestions:

- Strengthen professional development for educators in learner-centred and digital pedagogies.
- Integrate the five pillars of Education 5.0@UiTM across programme curricula and assessment design to ensure humanised, values-driven outcomes.
- Expand digital infrastructure and equity funds to ensure inclusive access to technology.
- Institutionalise collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching by incentivising cross-faculty projects and industry partnerships.
- Promote the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to foster research-informed innovation in pedagogy.
- Ensure robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms to evaluate the impact of reforms.

Based on the most crucial factors identified in this study, namely, the integration of learner-centred pedagogy, technology in learning and research-informed teaching, future studies should focus on developing a comprehensive model of teaching excellence that empirically measures the impact of digital pedagogies on student engagement and graduate outcomes. New objectives may include evaluating institutional readiness and the long-term sustainability of Education 5.0 practices, using mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to capture both quantitative and experiential dimensions of teaching transformation.

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11. AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The sole author of this research prepared the data, contributed to the analysis of the results, and led the writing of the manuscript.

12. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I certify that the article is the author's original work. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This research/ manuscript has not been submitted for publication, nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. I testify that I have contributed significantly to the work, validity, and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to IJELHE.

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