Chapter 9
Promoting Greater Interactivity and Participative Learning through Collaborative and Virtual Learning Space

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ABSTRACT
With the implementation of various innovations and transformative learning and teaching practices, Taylor’s University continues to serve as the torchbearer in the sphere of private tertiary education in Malaysia. Since 2012, Taylor’s University has embarked on an ambitious journey to re-define student learning for better academic outcomes. The effective use of LMS (Learning Management System) or better known as TIMeS (Taylor’s Integrated Moodle e-learning System) @ Taylor’s University has yielded highly engaging learning opportunities for students to learn at anytime and anywhere. It is Taylor’s University’s aim to be in the cutting edge of technology and to implement the finest learning design for its students as the university realizes that learning space plays an important role in producing work-ready graduates.

INTRODUCTION
Creating a transformational learning experience at higher learning institutions is crucial to ensure students retention and success. At Taylor’s University, we pride ourselves in leading the way towards transforming the teaching and learning landscape in the country. Since 2012, Taylor’s University has embarked on an ambitious journey to re-define student learning for better academic outcomes. By adopting strategic and systematic university-wide implementation of technology to enhance face-to-face interaction, the University envisions every student to learn in a collaborative, self-directed and personalized manner anytime and anywhere (Taylor’s University e-Learning Strategic Plan, 2011).

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This e-Learning mission is guided by the following principles:

- Blended learning is driven by pedagogical considerations (with a minimum of 30% e-Learning activities calculated based on Student-Learning time), not the demands and availability of the technologies themselves.
- The diversity of teaching practice and learning styles are recognized and appreciated, with new learning technologies driving towards increasingly sophisticated usage of e-Learning tools by staff and students.
- Blended learning is considered and developed as an integral part of teaching, equivalent to other methods such as lectures, practicals and seminars, and are therefore linked with learning outcomes, module delivery and assessment aims.

Under the Taylor’s University e-Learning Strategic Plan, students will experience blended learning, with an ability to access a significant portion of learning content via e-Learning. Students will autonomously shift between platforms according to their preferred learning styles. Synchronous (time-dependent) and asynchronous (time-independent) modes of e-Learning will be adopted depending on specific learning outcomes. The establishment of reliable infrastructure and timely support for blended learning initiatives are also the key success in this transformational change. Investments are made in the provision of optimal formal, informal, virtual and social learning spaces. Learning spaces are transformed to enable academics to adopt “Less Is More”, embracing teach less, learn more strategy through the effective and meaningful use of leading pedagogical innovations.

PROJECT X-SPACE TO DEVELOP GREATER COMMUNICATION AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN THE SPECIALLY DESIGNED COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

Learning spaces should be flexible, future proofed, bold, creative, supportive and enterprising (Todhunter, 2015). When we embarked on the journey to transform the learning spaces in 2013, various research and benchmarking visits have been conducted to ensure learning spaces are future proof, able to accommodate current and evolving pedagogies, allowed to be rearranged and reconfigured. Furthermore, it needs to energize and inspire lecturers and students, be supportive to develop the potential of all students and make each space capable for different purposes, as well as yields highly engaging learning opportunities.

It is Taylor’s University’s aim to be in the cutting edge of technology and to implement the finest learning design for its students. The University realizes that learning space plays an important role in producing work-ready graduates. By converting the traditional classroom into a technology-rich collaborative classroom that is purposefully designed, it will facilitate a diverse learning experience among the learners in a highly collaborative and engaging manner. In other words, it allows students to work independently on specific tasks and come together in a group to discuss project (Lippman, 2015).

X-Space is defined as a collaborative learning environment that applies interactive technologies with the communication infrastructure (Ng, Lim & Nair, 2014). It is the revamped future classrooms at the university and its aim is to provide an ideal learning space for collaborative and engaging learning opportunities to take place. The X-Space’s size, design, media/technology, use of color, selection of furniture, lighting, electrical access, wireless access and other props for each of the elements mentioned