Chapter 5

Designing an Interactive and Engaging Module Sites Using the RASA Model

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ABSTRACT

In Taylor’s University, Taylor’s integrated Moodle e-learning system (TIMeS) is the learning management system (LMS) that instructors use to deliver and manage module site. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the R.A.S.A. (resources, activities, supports, and assessments) model, an innovative technique used in designing module site which led to improved student achievement. The resources are visually engaging and interactive. They are followed by both facilitated and self-paced activities, which enable students to learn at anytime and anywhere. The simulation and scenario-based activities engages the student’s intellect and imagination, while the game-based activities create a fun and motivating experience to the student. These activities are supported by synchronous and asynchronous communication tools. Students can use forum, discussion board to collaborate, and social apps to comment and exchange ideas. Assessment tools such as quiz, assignment, and student response systems are used to gather real-time feedback on student performance.

INTRODUCTION

Taylor’s University is one of Malaysia’s most successful and reputable private higher education institutions. It is a modern and progressive university, well respected in Malaysia and often considered a benchmark for other private higher education providers. Offering a range of programmes from foundation and diploma, to degree, post-graduate and professional programmes, the university’s 13 schools include business, medicine, hospitality, engineering, architecture, law, etc. Today, with approximately 12,000 students and 600 academics, Taylor’s University continues to serve as the torchbearer in the sphere of private tertiary education in Malaysia. Taylor’s University made history when it obtained the highly coveted ‘Tier 6: Outstanding’ rating in the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education’s Discipline-Based
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Rating System (D-SETARA) in 2012. Taylor’s University is the first and only university to ever achieve ‘Tier 6’, the highest rating in this inaugural rating exercise conducted by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) for the Tourism & Hospitality discipline. Most recently, Taylor’s University’s has been listed among the top 250 universities in Asia in the QS Asia Ranking. This achievement is an important milestone for a young, dynamic and ambitious university like Taylor’s University, in line with its aim of becoming one of Asia’s leading universities. In 2015, Taylor’s University is the only recipient for Gold award in the “Education & Learning” category for Putra Brand Awards for the sixth consecutive years and Reader’s Digest Trusted Brand Gold Award in the Private University/College Category for the fifth consecutive years. (http://university.taylors.edu.my/).

In recent years, many studies have shown that e-Learning enhance learning among students. As e-Learning starts to gain popularity, consideration needs to be given to the delivery system to be used by the instructors. All institutions of higher education in Malaysia are using one form of e-Learning tool or another. The most common tool that all major institutions have is a Learning Management System (LMS) namely Moodle or Blackboard. The Modular Object Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle) Learning Management System (LMS) is an online platform where educators can design and deliver online learning experiences to students. Moodle is currently evolving to suit the needs of the learning community. It is currently used by many educators around the world to disseminate learning content, assessment and communication. Moodle is now used not only in universities, but also in high schools, primary schools, non-profit organizations, private companies, and by independent teachers (Al-Ajlan and Zedan, 2008; Dougiamas, 2004). It offers the ability to create chats, forums, wikis, and online quizzes. It can also track learner’s progress, and can be monitored by both instructors and learners (Moodle 2009). It is important to note that a Learning Management System without an effective instructional design will not produce any significant learning results.

In Taylor’s University, Taylor’s Integrated Moodle e-Learning System (TIMeS) is adopted by all lectures for these purposes. This LMS was developed in-house by Taylor’s University since 2008 as the main e-learning platform. Taylor’s University offers programs in multiple formats, from completely online, referred as Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to a blended or hybrid mode, a combination of both face-to-face and online instruction using TIMeS. There are no conclusive findings that showed that online learning is more effective than face-to-face learning, or one type of e-learning approach is more effective than another. However, multiple findings have shown that learning outcomes are improved with blended learning, a combination of face-to-face student-teacher learning and technology-mediated learning (Means et al., 2009; Roblyer and Doering, 2009). For lecturers, there are increased pressures through increased teaching hours, growing reporting and administrative requirements and pressure to develop their research activity. Hence, the development of effective e-Learning module site will help to solve the problem. Nowadays students are often characterized as digitally literate, socially connected, experiential, independent and valuing collaboration. They are more likely to adopt these materials since they are technology-savvy and influenced by a world of computer, chat, email and web. They learn on things that are meaningful for them, they learn by doing and experience it, and they like to share and collaborate with others. Instructor must effectively tap on students’ existing familiarity with technology to engage them in learning and facilitate them in achieving academic excellence to become a lifelong learner. Hence, the creative use of technologies to create innovative and engaging module site is important. Technology is a powerful and effective tool that transcends traditional, teacher-centered to learner-entered instruction. Besides traditional roles as lecturer and advisor, instructor must now able to utilize