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TUTOR AND TECHNOLOGY

Conceptually, OUM tutors are technologically astute. They employ technologies to not only bridge the physical distance between them and the learners they support, they also promote thinking and learning in ways which were not possible before the advent of the Internet. In this issue, we draw from the experiences of tutors and seasoned practitioners to explore the role of technology as well as emerging technologies in teaching and learning within the context of OUM. We also look at ways of overcoming technology shyness for tutors and learners as well as the practicalities and limitations of e-learning.

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ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is an OUM e-newsletter that provides a dedicated link between the University and its tutors. It serves as a channel for news and updates on tutor-related events and as a platform for the sharing of views, experiences and tips on best practices in university teaching and learning.

TCX is published electronically five times a year (twice in the January and September semesters, and once in the May semester).

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Once upon a time in China, a monster destroyed the people's crops and homes. It turned up after the sun had appeared 365 times. It feared three things: light, noise and the colour red. So, on the 365th evening, the people lit up their homes, displayed red objects, struck drums and performed lion dances. The monster disappeared. This is the legend behind the Chinese New Year celebration.

The slaying of "monsters" still takes place in China today. There are factories which employ people to play computer games. Their job is to kill monsters and win battles in the early rounds of a game. In return, they get paid by affluent online gamers abroad, who lack the time and patience to work their way up to the higher levels of gamedom.

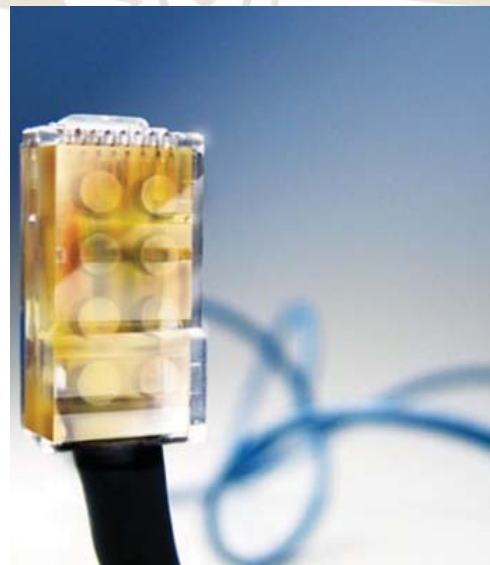
From this, we could say that technology reaps profits, even in play. The game players used online resources to earn offline remuneration. The great thing about technology is that it comes in various forms and could be used in a range of fields for diverse purposes. At OUM, technical knowledge, skills and tools could be used for the benefit of the teaching and learning process.

Themed "Tutor and Technology," this current issue of TCX focuses on the use of technology by both tutors and learners. Emerging applications are highlighted as well, as OUM aspires to be at the frontlines in making use of the latest technological tools to provide quality higher education.

Technology plays a crucial role in increasing understanding of a subject matter among learners. Furthermore, computer-related activities together with the use of the latest gadgets and devices in the teaching and learning process prepare learners for the upcoming challenge of living up to the expectations of the modern world, which is mainly dependent on technology. This is a development we cannot deny and instead, must accept and embrace.

Thus, we hope the articles we have presented here will inspire and motivate our tutors to optimise the use of technology in reaching out to our learners. Do read the articles and drop us a line on what you think – you could e-mail us at tcx@oum.edu.my.

Regards,
Azeezah Jameelah
Editor





However, upon retrospection and careful consideration of their grievances, I think the cause of this is the inconsistency among tutors in the way we interpret the demands of an assignment and the way we mark them. Neither of these, though, I believe, is the fault of the tutors as marking schemes are often provided to them very late in the day, sometimes far too late. I do not know the reason for this “assignment first, marking scheme later,” approach.

I would like to suggest that marking schemes be provided together with the assignments. Then, the tutors teaching the same subject are not likely to make differing demands on the students with regard to the assignments. In fact, students could be better guided and more importantly, reliability and validity will be ensured.

*Earnest Manuel
Perak Learning Centre*

HIGHER LEARNING TODAY

Nowadays, learning has become more flexible. Adult learning is all about change – in attitude, knowledge, behaviour, skills, thinking and productivity. There are many significant differences between adult learners and fresh school-leavers.

Adult learners are more self-directed and take responsibility for their learning experience. They are learner-oriented, unlike fresh school-leavers who prefer to be teacher-oriented and expect to be spoonfed by their lecturers. In addition, adult learners have vast life experiences to support new learning approaches. They also prefer a practical and immediately relevant approach to their studies and would appreciate a subject if it is relevant to their field.

I think as the human capital moves towards intellectual progress, we should redesign and redevelop our mindset to be able to face the challenges from outside. We should have a higher level of thinking and acquire k-knowledge (general knowledge) and p-knowledge (programmed knowledge) to be competitive in this era of globalisation.

*Billy
Keningau Learning Centre*

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

I have been teaching at OUM’s Perak Learning Centre for many years now and the feedback from my students has always occupied the top spot in my priority list for personal improvement. The frequent grouse from my students is that I have high expectations of them in terms of their assignments. I will not deny this, for I subscribe to the Chinese adage, “Aim for the sky because should you fall, you fall among the stars.”

TRANSITION FROM TEXTBOOKS TO MODULES AT POSTGRADUATE LEVEL

Since September last year, textbooks have been replaced by modules as learning materials for our learners at the postgraduate level. This transition has received mixed reactions from the learners, some welcoming the change, while others are against it.

In my opinion, this transition can be seen as an advantage for the learners. Among others, unlike the bulkier hardcover textbooks, modules are lighter and smaller. Furthermore, for distance learners, modules are easier to understand with compact and straight-to-the-point information.

I believe that modules are sufficient for our Masters learners because the modules are well-written by subject matter experts who are experts in their relevant areas. Hence, the modules at OUM are of high quality and would clearly benefit our learners.

*Jaspal Kaur Naranjan Singh
Faculty of Information Technology
and Multimedia Communications*

We welcome letters from our readers on any issue that may be of concern to you. You may use a pseudonym if you wish but please mention which learning centre you are from. Please e-mail us at tcx@oum.edu.my.



BE ON TIME EVERY TIME

Many of us live by the philosophy of “Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow?” When faced with a dreaded task, we often avoid doing it until the final hour. If asked about it, we could rattle off a list of excuses. But the fact is, procrastination does not pay. We end up not achieving all that we could. And by delaying our work, we delay the work of others as well. This will gradually soil our own reputation. So, let’s adopt a new philosophy – “Be on time every time.”

IMPORTANT DATES

OMES Deadlines

| PROGRAMME | ACTIVITY | DATE (2009) |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| Undergraduate | Key in marks for assignment and quizzes | 2 – 15 March |
| | Key in marks for online participation | 1 – 7 April |
| Postgraduate | Key in marks for Assignment 1 | 16 – 28 February |
| | Key in marks for Assignment 2 | 16 – 29 March |
| | Key in marks for online participation | 24 – 30 April |

Upcoming Activities

| ACTIVITY | DATE (2009) | REMARKS |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Teaching Permit Application | Tutorial 4 *Extended | Submit your application form to the Administrator at your learning centre. |
| Lead Tutor Dialogue & National Colloquium For Tutors | April | Selected participants will include tutors, subject matter experts, learning centre administrators, academicians, management and administrative staff. |
| Tutor Dialogue | To be scheduled by Learning Centre | To share experience and forge strong relationship among OUM tutors; to create a sense of belonging towards OUM; to have a better understanding of OUM’s vision, mission and values; and to raise concerns and make suggestions |
| New/ Senior Tutors/ Facilitators Monitoring | Tutorials 1 – 5 | Class observations will be done by lead tutors and academic staff. |
| Malaysian Qualifications Agency Visit/ Interview | February and March | Learning Centres and Programmes: Bangi: <i>Bachelor & Diploma in Human Resource Management</i> Shah Alam S7: <i>Bachelor & Diploma of Tourism Management</i> Serdang Raya: <i>Bachelor of Nursing Science</i> Petaling Jaya: <i>Bachelor of Mathematics with Information Technology</i> |

STRAIGHT-TALKING WITH PROF AHMAD

By Lilian Kek Siew Yick

PROF AHMAD HASHEM is the General Manager of Technology for OUM as well as the GM for Meteor Technology and Consultancy Sdn Bhd (MTCBSB). Armed with a PhD in aeronautics, the 54 year old has been serving at the University for more than six years. The following interview gives us a glimpse into the issue of harnessing technology for the benefit of the OUM community.

Lilian: Please tell us a bit about your work.

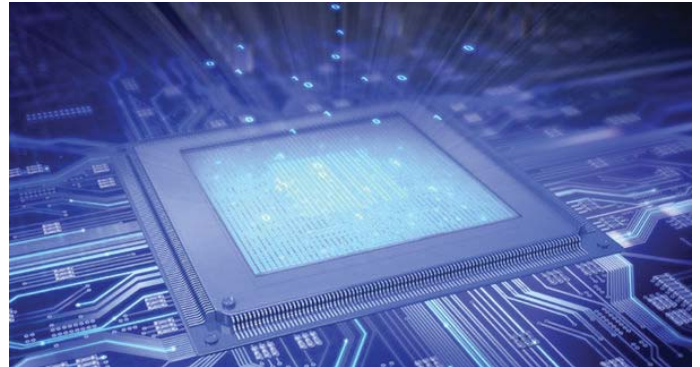
Prof Ahmad: For OUM, I try to ensure that all the required technology is made available. I also chair a small committee to look into current and future trends in e-learning and how best to adapt these to the OUM context. At MTCBSB, I manage almost 60 staff. We are an ICT solutions provider, that is, we are a business that provides information systems and consultancy for clients both nationally and internationally.

Lilian: What do you feel is the role of technology in education, generally speaking?

Prof Ahmad: Technology can add extra dimensions to conventional teaching and learning. For example, when a teacher is teaching about Vietnam, the Internet can enable students to visit and see actual live scenes in Vietnam through webcams. Students can also speak to native speakers through web-based meeting or some other applications. Just imagine that! Thus, technology, if used properly can enhance teaching and learning. It must be remembered that technology is a powerful tool and like all powerful tools, requires care during use to ensure that the desired results are obtained.

Lilian: How could technology be used to help in the provision of open and distance learning (ODL) in particular?

Prof Ahmad: Technology can help in the delivery process. The Internet is used for online learning. A compact disc can store a lot of information such as books and videos that can be distributed to students in remote areas with no Internet access. Also, mobile devices such as phones and MP3 players can be leveraged to facilitate mobile learning.



OUM uses technology to manage almost all aspects of its operations.

Lilian: Within the context of OUM, what is the role of technology?

Prof Ahmad: OUM uses technology to manage almost all aspects of its operations – from managing the provision of learning to managing the entire learning process. OUM is a lean organisation, for example, the administration of each faculty is carried out by one dean and four or five executives. Compare this with faculties in conventional universities where the dean will have at least 20 administrative staff to help him, not counting the heads of the various departments. By being lean, OUM can reduce unnecessary costs and pass on the savings to its students. It has not increased fees since it started operations. Technologies also facilitate transactions and communications between students and OUM. Students can access all relevant information online, make payments through direct bank transfer and submit queries online. Even after normal office hours, students can still access learning contents and conduct discussions with their peers and their tutors. Technology makes learning very flexible.

Lilian: In what ways could tutors use technology in their tutoring activities?

Prof Ahmad: Tutors can use the forum in MyLMS to discuss issues concerning study material with their students. They can set up virtual office hours so that students can communicate via mobile or online avenues such as chat

(Continued on next page)

and e-mail. Tutors can also use materials available on the Internet to supplement their teaching. Tutors and their students can set up social networks, for example, in DevianART and Facebook. They can share common interests as well as discuss academic matters. There are all sorts of things that can be done such as setting up blogs that are relevant to students, posting teaching videos on YouTube and so on.

Lilian: *What could tutors advise new learners to do in order to become familiarised with the use of technology in their learning?*

Prof Ahmad: Do not be afraid of technology. Get familiar with a small portion first. Be comfortable and then increase the use of technology. Treat technology as a tool, as you would a pen or a calculator. It may take a bit of time to get familiarised but be rest assured that almost everybody can use technology.

Lilian: *We have heard that the University might use an anti-plagiarism software called Turnitin in the future. Could you tell us a bit about it?*

Prof Ahmad: Turnitin is a proprietary software that compares essays and assignments to its own database of essays, the Internet as well as several subscription databases. It produces a report on the extent of similarity between the submitted work and work from other sources. Use of this and other similar software is not meant to be punitive. Rather, it is to encourage proper learning. Students can submit their essays and get a report of the extent of similarity as a result of the comparison. From this report, students can improve on their work so that their essays are entirely original. Currently, we are using Turnitin to verify the originality of our modules. We have used similar software on student assignments as part of a pilot project. At the moment, we are studying the implications of using this software.

Lilian: *How would this software benefit OUM, its tutors and its learners?*

Prof Ahmad: As I mentioned before, the use of this and similar software is not to punish but to encourage proper and ethical use of reference materials. Learners benefit from knowing that their efforts to produce original work are being recognised. Tutors no longer need to harbour any doubts on learners' submitted works and can now focus fully on evaluating the quality of work. OUM always strives to ensure high-quality education so any initiative that can ensure quality is of benefit to OUM.

Lilian: *Overall, what challenges do you feel might arise or have arisen in using technology in ODL education?*

Prof Ahmad: The age of OUM students span the range from a bit older than 17 to a bit younger than 80. We are an institution that can have a grandfather, a father and a son as registered students all at the same time! This is a big challenge for us. The younger ones are mostly technology savvy and expect a lot of technological input in their learning. Those at the other end of the age range, however, may require quite a bit of gentle persuasion to be tech-enabled. There is also the digital divide between urban and less urban students to contend with. While most urban learners can easily avail themselves of whatever technology that is required, their less urban counterparts may have to settle for less cutting-edge technology or sometimes none at all. The stability and availability of Internet connections in many areas throughout Malaysia also leaves a lot to be desired. It is difficult to provide online learning if the quality and availability of the Internet connection cannot be guaranteed.

Lilian: *How could these challenges be overcome?*

Prof Ahmad: OUM must cater to the needs of all our students. So, we must have specially designed offerings to suit the majority of capabilities. We must provide print-based material, media-rich contents, podcasts, videos, mobile contents and so on. We are doing many of these now. Also, it is important that all our academic staff know and use the relevant technologies so that they can understand the ever-changing scenario of learning technology. They must leverage on the very same tools that are popular among students. We hope the government and the private sector would speed up the deployment of nationwide broadband and that the cost of technology can be made affordable through subsidies, tax reductions, etc. Only by being affordable to the masses can technology be ubiquitous and bring the most benefit to the nation.

Lilian: *How do you envision the use of technology at OUM in the future?*

Prof Ahmad: The technologies being used at OUM always evolve to suit requirements. We never stop reinventing ourselves. For learning, we are looking at Web 2.0 and e-learning 2.0. We will also leverage more on open educational resources as well as participate more in web communities. We are dabbling with the 3D landscape of applications such as Second Life to use in certain specialised learning contexts. In addition, we are continually exploring the new universe and from where we are now, the future certainly looks exciting.

Lilian: *Thank you for your answers, Prof Ahmad.*

Prof Ahmad: Welcome.

INTERVIEW WITH PROF MOHAMMED

By Majmin Hanum Abdul Samad

PROF DR MOHAMMED YUSOFF is the Dean of the Faculty of Information Technology and Multimedia Communications.

Majmin: Please tell us about your vision for FITMC.

Prof Mohammed: My vision is for FITMC to be one of the leaders in distance education for information and communication technology.

Majmin: I understand that Bachelor in Multimedia Technology with Honours is the newest programme offered by the FITMC. What can our students expect from this programme?

Prof Mohammed: They will get basic knowledge and discover tools in multimedia technology which will enable them to become multimedia designers, programmers and project managers as well as content developers.

Majmin: Is the faculty planning to offer any other new programmes or initiatives this year?

Prof Mohammed: Yes, BSc in Computer Science, Master of Information Technology in Network Computing and Master of Information Technology in Computer Security.

Majmin: What advice would you give to those who wish to pursue their education in information technology?

Prof Mohammed: Work hard and be innovative.

Majmin: To learn at OUM, it has become a necessity for one to possess computer and Internet skills. How important is the role of technology in the teaching and learning process in an ODL institution such as OUM?

Prof Mohammed: Technology is very important as the students have limited face to face meetings with their tutors.

Majmin: How could tutors use technology to enhance their tutoring activities at OUM?

Prof Mohammed: First of all, they need to appreciate that most OUM students are part-timers. In order to enhance their tutoring activities, they need to allocate time for the students, rethink and redesign their teaching and delivering methods.

Majmin: Technology can bring people together. It helps break down the barriers of distance among tutors and learners. At the same time, not all tutors and students feel at ease with technology; some still have fear of the computer and all things technology. How could OUM overcome this "technology shyness"?

Prof Mohammed: Provide them with training and show them the benefits of using technology.

Majmin: In a nutshell, what are the challenges in using technology in an ODL institution?

Prof Mohammed: Some places have no Internet connection. The challenges are to develop good e-content and to get the students and tutors to use the technology.

Majmin: Mobile learning will soon be a distinct feature to support teaching and learning at OUM. How would it benefit OUM, its tutors and its learners?

Prof Mohammed: They can access the contents anywhere.

Majmin: As new advancements in ICT continue to flood the education scene, what emerging technology should OUM look into in order to promote tutor-learner interaction in an ODL context?

Prof Mohammed: Wireless technology.

ONLINE POLL

To what extent should tutors be competent in IT?

1. Highly competent in myLMS components such as the forum. Moderately competent in other IT applications such as MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint and so on.
2. Highly competent in both myLMS components and IT applications such as MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
3. More competent than the average OUM learner such as being able to create blogs and e-content for the students.

Please cast your votes online!



MOBILE LEARNING FOR LEARNERS ON THE MOVE

By Prof Zoraini Wati Abas

Can you imagine using your mobile phone or any other mobile device to study? According to a survey, about 83% of OUM learners could.

In January, the University began providing mobile learning materials for its learners. The first set of materials, available now, is for OUMH 1103 Learning Skills for Open and Distance Learners. One could view, read or listen to the podcasts at <http://mlearn.oum.edu.my/>.

OUM's mobile learning initiative has three objectives:

- To enhance the current blended learning mode;
- To increase the flexibility of learning; and
- To support learning at any time and at any place through the use of mobile devices such as mobile phones, MP3 and MP4 players.

Mobile learning may be the next wave after e-learning. Taking into account that OUM learners might benefit from it, a mobile learning research and development group was formed last August. It is headed by the writer who has wide experience in conceptualising and developing various e-learning initiatives. The group first met on 19 August 2008 and to date, has 17 members from all faculties.

Before the pilot launch, a survey was conducted to find out whether OUM learners were ready for mobile learning. A total of 2,837 learners in 31 learning centres in both the undergraduate and graduate programmes responded to a questionnaire distributed in October 2008.

The survey produced encouraging findings. It found that 98.9% of the learners had a mobile phone. Almost half of the respondents were ready to learn through a mobile device within six months of the survey. Another 15.7% said they would be ready within the next 7 to 12 months. And about 5.9% said they would be ready within 13 to 24 months. Interestingly, 65.95% of the learners were even willing to buy a mobile device priced between RM250 and RM1500 so that they could engage in m-learning.

The respondents comprised about 60% females and about 40% males. Of the total number, almost 70% were from Peninsular Malaysia while the rest were from Sabah and Sarawak.

MOBILE LEARNING @ OUM

OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

Start

View Portal Site

Welcome Note

Salam and Greetings,

I wish to welcome OUM community to the first of Mobile Learning @ OUM Portal. OUM recognizes m-learning as an exciting form of learning that uses mobile technologies to enhance the learning experience. [more...](#)

^

m-Learning at OUM

Imagine that you are on a long-distance trip. You are in a plane, a train, a car or a bus. What do you do to while away all those hours? Do you read a book, listen to music, chat with your fellow travellers or simply drift off to sleep? [more...](#)

^

m-Learning Content

OUMH1103

Thus far, the mobile learning research and development group has identified 10 courses for which mobile learning content are to be produced by the end of this year. For more details on the project, please visit <http://mlearn.oum.edu.my/>.

Prof Zoraini Wati Abas is the Head of the Mobile Learning Research and Development Team. She is also the director of OUM's Institute of Quality, Research and Innovation.

MYLMS – A TUTOR’S BEST BUDDY

By Aw Yoke Cheng

This is my sixth year as a tutor with OUM since August 2003. Since I became a tutor, I have taught a few courses related to business management and management information systems which include Information Technology for Management, E-Commerce, Principles of Management, and Merchandising. I have also taught two OUM common courses – Learning Skills for Open and Distance Learners, and Entrepreneurship.

As a tutor, I realise that I shoulder the responsibility of supporting and optimising learning for open and distance learners. In order to meet their expectations, I need to imagine the experience of ODL from their perspective. I have to “think like a learner, then act like a teacher.” Throughout these years with OUM, I realised that ICT is a very powerful source, especially myLMS which has helped me a lot in playing my role.

My involvement is the same as that of other tutors. A semester is divided into three stages: pre-tutoring, tutoring, and post-tutoring. All these stages require me to fully make use of the ICT resources available to meet the expectations of the learners, OUM and myself.

The pre-tutoring stage is the beginning phase where I will be contacted by the administrator from the learning centre to assign me a particular course. The course will be activated on the myLMS portal.

The tutoring stage begins when I meet the learners to provide a total of 10 hours of tutorials, which are divided into three sessions for a short semester and five sessions for a normal semester. The post-tutorial stage commences after the last face-to-face tutorial session up to the final examination.

Pre-Tutoring Stage

ICT skills are very important for me in order to support my learners and the institution. Among these skills are handling basic office applications i.e. Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint, surfing the Internet and retrieving information.

I usually begin a semester by surfing the myLMS portal to activate the online interaction on the myLMS discussion forum. I will post a welcome message and provide my contact information for the purpose of academic



I have to “think like a learner, then act like a teacher.”

consultation. The welcome message could also “warm-up” the learners to a course.

I also need to know who the Subject Matter Expert (SME) for the course is so that I could use the tutor-SME platform in myLMS.

Tutoring Stage

In this stage, I use the myLMS, myGMail and myLibrary. Before the face-to-face tutorials, I will surf for useful weblinks related to the course and provide these URLs to the learners during the tutorials. I will encourage the learners to browse the URLs to acquire up-to-date information. The e-books and e-journals provided by the Digital Library are also a very good resource.

I use myGmail to communicate with my learners. Some learners also e-mail me via myGMail for assistance.

I consider the myLMS discussion forum as my virtual workstation where I could meet my clients – the learners – virtually. Other than answering questions posted by learners, I also post certain topics or current issues related to the areas taught during tutorials to stimulate

(Continued on next page)

collaborative online learning. The topics may not require definite answers. Instead, these could be industry-relevant questions with open-ended answers. This is also a good avenue to clarify doubts about assignments.

MyLMS provides a useful tool to track the number of postings by learners. This allows me to closely monitor the participation of the learners. I could then encourage the less active learners during tutorials to participate more. The five marks allocated for online participation could serve as a motivator. I will inform the learners of the expectations on both quantity (frequency) and quality (creativity, contribution and maturity of thinking) of the messages they post.

At times, I discovered that some learners who were passive in tutorials were active in myLMS.

Post-Tutoring Stage

Things are not over although the tutorials have ended. Work needs to be done to provide marks on the learners' formative assessments and to prepare them for their final examination. The myLMS forum could still be an active platform at this critical moment for me to clarify any doubts on the subject matter and minimise examination anxiety among learners.

Timely marking is necessary on the learners' formative assessments, which consist of quizzes, online participation and written assignment. For this, I need to be familiar with the web-based tools provided by OUM, namely, the Online Marks Entry System (OMES). Other than providing

grades for assessment, the marking process also generates comments in order to provide feedback. So, for the written assignment, I have to highlight the weaknesses or mistakes to enable learners to improve themselves.

When the final examination has ended and the claim form has been submitted to the administrator, I could say that is the end of a semester for me as a tutor.

There are a lot of ODL collaborations between learners and me which take place through the use of ICT. Learners could engage other learners and me in ways that are simply not possible without ICT. Effective tutoring could only be possible if every one of us is committed to utilising the ICT resources available. **TCX**

Aw Yoke Cheng is a tutor at the Shah Alam (Section 7) learning centre in Selangor. We are pleased to present Aw with RM50 as a token of appreciation for contributing this article.



WRITE FOR TCX AND WIN RM50!

Are you currently a tutor at OUM? Looking for an outlet to share your thoughts about any aspect of teaching and learning?

If so, we'd love to hear from you.

Send us your completed articles. Or, if you prefer, chat with the Editors about story ideas you're thinking of developing. E-mail us at tcx@oum.edu.my.

If your article is published, you'll receive a token sum of RM50. (Internal and full-time staff are not eligible).

HOW TO OVERCOME TECHNOLOGY SHYNESS?

By Dr Thirumeni T. Subramaniam

I always advise my learners to try and improve themselves. Learners cannot afford to be technology shy as the current situation does not permit us to be shy.

Aznil

Petaling Jaya Learning Centre

Technology keeps changing. Keeping up with these changes will enhance human life. Here are some ways to overcome the shyness:

- Be part of the community (friends and relatives) which loves technology;
- Keep up with the latest gadgets;
- Have access to a PC three to five times a week;
- Relate to the roles played by the government in promoting ICT;
- Track changes in technologies through friends; and
- Participate in technology-based programmes.

Tony

Shah Alam (U1) Learning Centre

Learn from mistakes and take action. Do it every day and place no time constraints. After several trials, you will be familiar with technology.

Sheila

Shah Alam (U1) Learning Centre

You can overcome technology shyness by subscribing to relevant RSS feeds and having a brave heart to try, discover and explore new things. Utilise web portals such as NETVIBES at <http://www.netvibes.com> to obtain the latest news on technology. Make it a daily practice.

Raj

Bangi Learning Centre

Try to get more exposure to new technology. If necessary, attend training or courses.

Bernard

Shah Alam (U1) Learning Centre

Often, learners are not tech-shy but shy to participate. I would often remind them of the need to participate. They can also be encouraged by being informed of useful websites.

Lina

Shah Alam (Section 7) Learning Centre

Read about and expose yourself to the use of technology. Learn and get to know more about the latest developments in the field.

Hassan

Shah Alam (U1) Learning Centre

As a tutor, I try to learn more about technology. This often requires practice. You can also learn from others who have more experience. You may need to try several times until you actually master it.

Sara

Shah Alam (U1) Learning Centre

I read about technology updates in magazines and make it a point to learn new technologies by using them. You should treat technology as an opportunity to advance yourself. Embrace whatever new technology that is introduced in the market.

Ainul

Petaling Jaya Learning Centre

Learn and force yourself to use technology as often as you can; you will soon discover that you no longer shy away from it.

Roshini

Shah Alam (Section 7) Learning Centre

• *The above names are pseudonyms.*

USING TECHNOLOGIES IN ODL ENVIRONMENT

By Christine Ling Bee Fong

In seven years, OUM has developed and continues to enhance its learning management system (LMS), e-library, e-content and i-Radio to facilitate the dissemination of information throughout the nation regardless of geographical and time barriers as well as providing face-to-face training. Technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT), has undergone dramatic changes, each time producing new and exciting opportunities for the education sector and breaking down the barrier of distance in education.

Distances between educators and learners are bridged through the use of e-learning technology. This has led to accessible education for all in this digital age. As online education continues to emerge, new pedagogy and mobile computing instruments on teaching and learning are needed as the power of learning is shifting to “just-in-time” e-learning independent of location in time or space.

Open and distance learning (ODL) is the only model which ensures uniformity in the quality of delivery. ODL institutions invariably use technology and the expenditure on students, infrastructure and faculty is relatively less compared to that of a regular institution. Socially disadvantaged groups have limited places in regular institutions. In contrast, ODL institutions place no ceiling on the number or any other condition for entry. Moreover, technology ensures that lessons reach far and wide even to remote areas with the help of various tools and applications.

OUM has its own instructional development team whose members are experts in technology. They convert the knowledge of subject matter experts into e-platforms and e-content which could be uploaded to mobile technologies. The integration of technology into the instructional content bridges the gap between distance learners and the institution. The standardisation of information technology in education, by way of widespread adoption of robust and dependable Learning Management Systems (LMS) via web interface, has made distance learning courses possible and easy to use by the institution and its learners.

As the nation’s first ODL provider, OUM has also embarked on efforts to introduce mobility in its teaching and learning approach through the use of mobile technologies. Both open learning and m-learning enable learners to study at their own pace, place, time and convenience. Learning



**ODL ensures uniformity
in the quality of delivery.**

and teaching applications in m-learning can significantly complement ODL by creating additional access for mobile users with mobile devices such as mobile phones, PDAs, tablet PCs and pocket PCs.

M-learning benefits information providers or instructors as well. Instructors may use mobile devices to distribute recorded lectures for students to review after class. Quizzes and topical discussions may be drafted and podcasts sent to students while waiting in line or in traffic. It reduces time wasted since it allows information to be created and transferred virtually anywhere.

The technology deployment of mobile learning in learning and teaching presents a few significant challenges that needs to be considered. The development of m-learning standards and best practices must also address issues such as the creation, delivery and interoperability of the content.

A technology does not replace conventional learning but rather, enhances learning through information and instructions. The challenge now is to choose the appropriate technology that can enhance communication, interaction and articulation among learners and teachers. Proper pedagogies are needed to cope with the digital divide and to suit the knowledge and preparedness of OUM learners.

TCX

A LESSON FROM GIRAFFES

Bringing a giraffe into the world is a tall order. A baby giraffe falls 10 feet from its mother's womb and usually lands on its back. Within seconds, it rolls over and tucks its legs under its body. From this position, it considers the world for the first time and shakes off the last vestiges of the birthing fluid from its eyes and ears. Then, the mother giraffe rudely introduces its offspring to the reality of life.

The following is how a newborn giraffe learns its first lesson. The mother giraffe lowers her head long enough to take a quick look. Then, she positions herself directly over her calf. She waits for about a minute and then she does the most unreasonable thing. She swings a long, pendulous leg outward and kicks her baby, sending it sprawling head over heels.

When it doesn't get up, the violent process is repeated over and over again. The struggle to rise is momentous. As the baby calf grows tired, the mother kicks it again to stimulate its efforts. Finally, the calf stands for the first time on its wobbly legs.

Then, the mother giraffe does the most remarkable thing. She kicks it off its feet again. Why? She wants it to remember how it got up. In the wild, baby giraffes must be able to get up as quickly as possible to stay with the herd, where there is safety. Lions, hyenas, leopards and wild hunting dogs all enjoy young giraffes, and they would get it too, if the mother didn't teach her calf to get up quickly and get with it.

The late Irving Stone, an American writer known for his biographical novels of famous historical personalities, understood this. He spent a lifetime studying greatness, writing novelised biographies of such men as Michelangelo, Vincent van Gogh, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin.

Stone was once asked if he had found a thread that runs through the lives of all these exceptional people. He said, "I write about people who sometime in their life have a vision or dream of something that should be accomplished and they go to work."

"They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified, and for years they get nowhere. But every time they are knocked down, they stand up. You cannot destroy these people. And at the end of their lives, they have accomplished some modest part of what they set out to do." **TCX**



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Source: <http://www.getmotivation.com/stories16.htm>



Jalan Tun Ismail,
50480 Kuala Lumpur
tcx@oum.edu.my

<http://tcx.oum.edu.my>