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BRANDING E-LEARNING FOR TOMORROW

TCX38 continues with the focus on e-learning. This issue features an interview with Jimmy Teo, Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education and Languages, who has been deeply involved in producing some of the key new e-learning tools at OUM. Read on to find out how OUM has been approaching e-learning, what projects are being developed, and what Jimmy thinks of the future of e-learning.

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ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is a non-profit 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.

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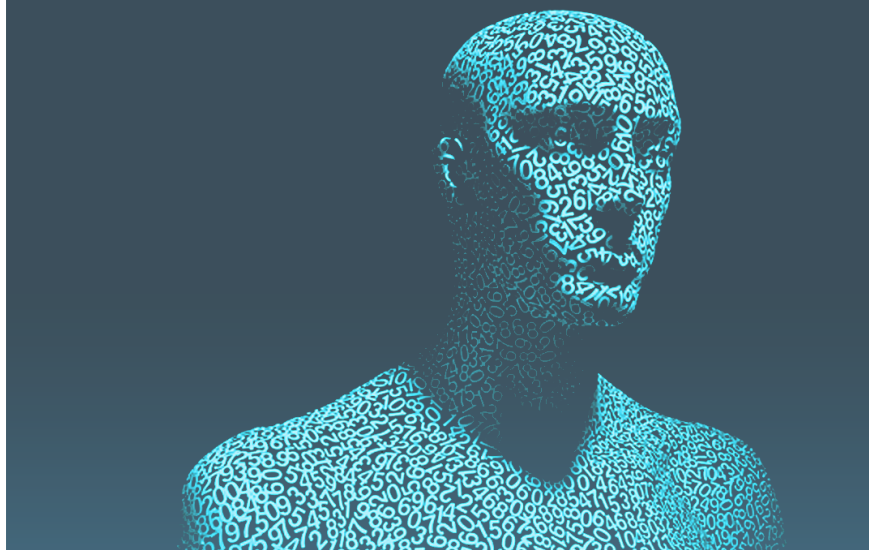
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EDITOR'S NOTE

In the past few issues, TCX has focused on quality e-learning. This issue continues to expand on the theme.

Featured in TCX38 is an interview with the amiable Jimmy Teo, a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education and Languages, who has worked on and continues to work on several key e-learning projects for OUM.

Those of us who have come to know Jimmy will know that he is always crackling with ideas for the development of new e-learning tools. In the interview, he talks about the projects he has worked on like e-GATE, EPiC, and iFEED, his take on the intersections of technology and education, and, most thought-provokingly of all, branding e-learning for tomorrow.

We hope this issue will plant an idea or two in your minds about what it really means, as OUM tutors, to do e-learning today and tomorrow.

We wish you a productive new semester ahead.

Best

Dr David CL Lim

Chief Editor

TUTOR INFO

IMPORTANT DATES

TUTORIAL 1	Existing Learners: 24-26 May 2013 New Learners: 14-16 June 2013
TUTORIAL 2	Existing Learners: 14-16 June 2013 New Learners: 28-30 June 2013
TUTORIAL 3	Existing Learners: 28-30 June 2013 New Learners: 12-14 July 2013
ASSIGNMENT DEADLINE	Existing Learners: 9-17 July 2013 New Learners: 16-18 July 2013 (Tutors should remind their learners to use the special assignment template and to submit their assignments online. This applies only to courses that require learners to submit their assignments online.)
TUTORIAL 4	Existing Learners: 12-14 July 2013 New Learners: 26-28 July 2013
TUTORIAL 5	Existing Learners: 26-28 July 2013
FINAL EXAMS	16 August-3 September 2013

CONTACT INFO

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F2F TUTOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS	Learning Centre Directors, OR ITLA Staff: 2773 2490/2493/2301, OR Email: aznam@oum.edu.my
ASSIGNMENT ONLINE SUBMISSION QUERIES	Email: assignment@oum.edu.my
MYVLE TECHNICAL ISSUES	myVLE Helpdesk: 2772 2283, OR Email: mylms_admin@oum.edu.my or aznam@oum.edu.my

FOR E-TUTORS

REMINDERS

1. All e-tutors must be visible in their respective forums.
2. Log in to the Forum at least 4 times a week.
3. Respond to learners' postings regularly. Do not ignore requests for help from learners.
4. Post questions and redirect questions to learners to encourage and stimulate discussions.
5. Post additional content-related resources (web links, videos, articles, etc.) to stimulate interest and spark discussion.
6. If there is an e-schedule for your course, please refer learners to the e-schedule to help guide them with weekly activities for the course. The e-schedule appears within the course on the left sidebar menu of myVLE.
7. Forums are monitored daily. Regular reminders will be sent by ITLA staff, e-Tutor mentors and the Head of e-Learning whenever necessary.
8. Please inform the Head of e-Learning at ITLA of any prolonged absence and inability to facilitate forum.
9. All e-tutors are required to use their OUM email account. Communication related to e-tutor matters will be made through your OUM email.
10. Email Notifications – When learners post in the forum, email notifications will be sent to your OUM mailbox. You can reply to the email, and your response will appear in the forum. Your responses via email will count towards your total number of postings and your number of logins into myVLE forum will be accounted for as well. Please do check your OUM mailbox often.
11. OUM Expectations:
 - Enter myVLE and check the forum every other day at the minimum
 - Post at least 8 postings a week
 - Check OUM mailbox regularly for email notifications of forum postings

FOR F2F TUTORS

Tutors are reminded **NOT** to:

1. Attend tutorial session unprepared
2. Reschedule the allotted tutorials
3. Cancel tutorial sessions
4. Arrive late for tutorials
5. Arrive late but record an earlier sign-in time
6. Leave tutorials before designated time
7. Read from module directly instead of highlighting or discussing the subject matter
8. Discuss non-academic matters during tutorials

ON E-TUTOR FB GROUP

If you have an FB account, do request to join the e-Tutor group on FB. Please email AP Dr Safiah at safiah_mdyusof@oum.edu.my.

ON ASSIGNMENTS

For courses with assignments:

1. Assignments, Assignment Rubrics and Assignment Templates for Learners have been uploaded to myVLE.
2. On online submission of assignments, do note that there are different deadlines for existing learners, new learners and the new BPG intake (please refer to important dates above).
3. No late submission of assignments will be accepted.
4. Do remind learners to start working on their assignments early and not wait until the last day to submit their assignments online.
5. A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on assignments is available on the left sidebar menu on myVLE.
6. F2F tutors and e-tutors can only provide guidance on completing the assignments based on the rubrics given. Please do not give any confirmation of marks for the assignments as the assignments will be graded by the e-graders.

ON F2F & E-TUTOR COMMUNITY AREAS

Tutors are encouraged to log in to the F2F Tutor Community and e-Tutor Community forums for continued support and development. The forums also give tutors and e-tutors the opportunity to exchange and share experiences with other tutors/e-tutors.

BRANDING E-LEARNING FOR TOMORROW

Interview with **JIMMY TEO** (jteo@oum.edu.my)

By AP Dr David CL Lim (david@oum.edu.my)

The interviewee for this issue is Jimmy Teo (see picture on the right), who shares with us his views on e-learning. Jimmy's passion lies in the area of creative methodology and the use of ICT in education. He taught in the primary, secondary and tertiary education environments for more than eight years before joining the corporate sector for seven years. He has since rejoined the field of education. Jimmy obtained his early training in education at University of Malaya where he graduated with a diploma, bachelor degree and master degree in TESL.



AP Dr David CL Lim: Since you joined OUM in 2009 as Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education and Languages (FEL), you have been involved in designing and building e-learning tools to enhance student learning experience. Can you recap some of the projects you have worked on?

Jimmy Teo: With the guidance and support of the Senior Vice President, Prof Dr Mansor Fadzil, and the Dean of FEL, Prof Dr Widad Othman, I've had the opportunity to work on a range of projects. Here I will only mention a few.

It all started with e-GATE [<http://egate.oum.edu.my>], which stands for Electronic Gateway to English Resources [see Illustration 1]. e-GATE has links to external sites as well as to internal content. The portal is accessible to all OUM learners, and to the public, seeking to improve their English language skills.

Learners can focus on any or all of the four skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. They can also choose the level at which to learn, be it beginner, intermediate or advanced. On top of all these, there is a soft-skill component to help learners acquire skills in time management, for instance.



Illustration 1: e-GATE

(Continued on next page)

After e-GATE, I worked on EPiC [<http://epic.edu.my>], or Education Portal for Internet Courses. EPiC is a fully online learning platform specially designed for our learners in the Sarjana Muda Pengajaran [SMP; Bachelor of Teaching] programme [see Illustration 2]. We now have more than 12,000 SMP learners using EPiC.

EPiC is a novel way of delivering the four compulsory courses that SMP learners need to take fully online, without face-to-face contact. The four courses are Co-Curriculum, Professional Development, Inclusive Education, and Professional Practice.

The idea behind EPiC is to push content to learners in digestible small chunks. Learners can flexibly utilize pockets of their free time to master these small chunks without being overwhelmed.

EPiC also allows learners to submit their course assignments online ahead of their respective deadlines. These assignments will then be reviewed by EPiC online tutors who would comment on the submissions, giving learners the opportunity to improve on their work if necessary for the final submission.

Another unique feature of EPiC is that it allows learners to compile an e-portfolio of all the assignments they have submitted. Learners' respective e-portfolios, which can be downloaded, will be immensely useful as testament of their work. They could be used, for instance, during promotional interview upon graduation to showcase their achievements.

One of the projects I'm currently working on is iFEED, which is short for Intelligent Feedback Database System. iFEED is, to put it simply, a smart tool that provides instant response to learner queries. For now, responses are for knowledge and comprehension questions.

Let me give you an example of how it works. Say a learner is taking a course like English for Written Communication, which is an OUM compulsory course. The learner has a specific query. So he types into the iFEED query box this question: "What are the models of communication?" Straight away, the iFEED database will compile and push to the learner the answer in multiple feeds [see Illustration 3].

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Illustration 2: EPiC

“All iFEED enabled courses have been tagged with the iFEED logo on myVLE. More courses will have the iFEED feature over the coming semesters.”

So far, OUM has developed iFEED for about 21 courses, including Business Research Methods [BMBR 5103], Software Engineering [CBSE 4103], Elementary Statistics [SBST 1303], and Introduction to Psychology [ABPG 1103]. All iFEED-enabled courses have been tagged with the iFEED logo on myVLE. More courses will have the iFEED feature over the coming semesters.

DL: To what extent would you say these projects you have worked on, or are currently working on, have been successful in meeting their objective of enhancing learners' learning experience?

JT: I would say that the tools have been successful in achieving what they were designed for. Of course, we would need to subsequently conduct impact studies on these tools to really gauge things.

But as it stands we've had a lot of positive feedback in the e-GATE guestbook. With EPiC, we've had less than 10 percent complaints from 12,000 users. iFEED is very new. So we haven't had any substantial feedback yet. But even at this early stage, we've had some very positive responses.

DL: What inspires you to work at the intersections of higher education and technology?

JT: I have a strong passion for education, and I have experience teaching at the primary school level right up to the tertiary level. And I am very much in touch with technological developments and am constantly exploring new gadgets and ideas to discover innovative tools that can be used to enhance pedagogy.

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ENGLISH FOR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION (OUMH1203) Quick link to course...

What's your question? What are the models of communication? iFEED ?

iFEED

6 result/s found

Feed #3 (title : 2.1)

CLAUDE SHANNON'S MODEL

Claude Shannon was an engineer who formulated an information theory based on mathematical theorems. His model of a communication system – developed in the 1940s – can be summarised in a diagram which shows that information is transmitted from a source through a channel to a receiver (see figure below):

SOURCE **CHANNEL** **RECEIVER**

Figure: Claude Shannon's model of communication

In Shannon's model, the encoding and decoding of information is of primary importance. Put simply, encode is "to compose" a message, whilst decode means "to interpret" the message. The process of encoding information for transmission, and of decoding received information is affected by "noise".

Noise is interference on the channel or media through which the information is transmitted. This can be external or inherent in the system and can mean many things, from bad printing of text to static interference of radio waves.

Shannon's model, however, is considered by many to be too mechanical because it ignores the reason people compose messages. The message itself is not always the reason people communicate; sometimes a piece of communication aims not so much to relay information as to build and maintain social relations.

For example, let us say that your client's general manager has just met with an accident and passed away. You send a letter of condolence to your client. In this case, the content of the letter is of secondary importance.

What is more important is the gesture – the sending of the letter which says, "We know of your loss and sympathise with you." This gesture aims to maintain the good relationship you already have with your client, even if there is a change in management. In this kind of cases, Shannon's model has limited impact.

See Also : [Feed 1] | [Feed 2] | [Feed 3]

Illustration 3: iFEED

My previous experience working in an international corporate environment, particularly in headhunting and grooming talent for multinational companies, has been immensely useful in helping me to identify learning gaps and training needs. It has helped me to be sensitive to the skills required to operate in the real world. I bring all this into my e-learning projects at OUM. For me, the e-learning projects I work on need to empower learners, scaffold their learning, and help them learn better.

DL: What is your view of e-learning in general? Do you think technology has been properly harnessed for use in education? Has its promise been fulfilled? Or do you find it true that it's difficult translating technology into education?

JT: To me, e-learning is the future. No question about it. E-learning skills are essential today because learning has become ubiquitous, no longer confined to the traditional classroom. This has been made possible by the power of the internet. With the Google Glass project becoming a reality now, soon everyone will be wearing the internet.

Having said that, I suspect many educationists are still not very clear about the role of technology in learning. For some, as long as they use some form of e-tools, or as long as they put some courses online, that's already e-learning. I don't think e-learning works that way. That's just too simplistic.

Personally I prefer to call this d-learning (or digital learning). This is because once everything is digitized it will be easier to break things apart and put them together in various configurations and different assemblies.

I'm a firm believer in learning driving technological use, rather than the other way around. I have seen how some have failed in delivering e-learning because they don't really understand what learning is about. To them, the more technology is used, the better. It's as if they're more interested in being seen as technologically savvy than being technologically savvy educationists.

It is possible we lack experts who understand both education and technology. We need people who can bridge this gap, since a technologist would not necessarily know how learning works, and an educationist would not necessarily know what e-tools are at their disposal.

DL: Do you see the gap between education and technology as a challenge peculiar to this part of the world or as a global phenomenon?

"I'm a firm believer in learning driving technological use, rather than the other way around."

JT: I don't think Malaysia is the only country facing the gap in question. I think it's found in many countries and institutions that are still grappling with the notion that learning, rather than technology, should be the driving force.

We need to see that, with e-learning, the learner should be in control. Learning is now on-demand, anytime, anywhere and anyhow. Learning has become borderless with no pedagogical constraints. So learners need to be prepared to be in control, to know what works best for them.

Also, I think we should not confuse learners by simply mixing traditional learning with e-learning. As an example, it would not be consistent for us to introduce a new learning style and to then assess learners in the conventional way using instruments designed for the traditional classroom.

If we want to do e-learning well, at the very least we should have a clear roadmap. We need to project what our learning environment will be five to ten years down the road. We need to know how we want learners to learn, what tools they will require, and how they will be assessed.

DL: Why, do you think, it is such a challenge to make technology really work in education?

JT: This is a tough question to answer. There are many interpretations as to what Educational Technology is about. To me, an educational technologist usually looks at tools and then thinks about where the tools can be fitted in education. I'd rather take the perspective of what I call an educational engineer, someone who looks at learning and then think of how to design and build tools that can enhance learning. Again, as I said, this is but one perspective of things.

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“I’d rather take the perspective of what I call an educational engineer, that is, someone who looks at learning and then think of how to design and build tools that can enhance learning.”

DL: How, then, would you view the global advent of MOOCs [massive open online courses] offered by the like of Udemy, edX, and Coursera, with the backing of elite universities like MIT, Harvard, University of California Berkeley, and so on?

brand. That means a strong teaching and learning tradition, and proven educational quality. Putting emphasis on quality is heading in the right direction but it should not be just cosmetic. To survive, a university should have a culture of excellence in every aspect and at every level. **TCX**

JT: I don’t know MOOCs in-depth but I can see that they’re getting very popular, especially with learners who cannot attend institutions like MIT and Harvard in person. Just look at the statistics of learner distribution by geographical area. The bulk of MOOCs learners are from the developing world. I would say MOOCs is heading in the right direction.

I think MOOCs serve as a good challenge to build our University’s brand. Recently, Prof Mansor gave a seminar on quality at OUM, and I believe, as he reminds us, that quality is the foundation of a strong brand.

Personally, I envision tomorrow as a world where people are constantly learning on their own, all skillfully using technology to learn and keep learning. All this can be done without necessarily enrolling with any institution. Once they have learnt enough on their own using vast internet resources at their disposal, they can choose an institution to be assessed and certified or accredited as having mastered set skills.

Obviously, these future learners will choose an institution with a strong brand. That’s a given. So, in the long run, the real competition among institutions is not to aim to have the highest student numbers but to deliver ever-on, branded, quality-assured products, services and experiences that learners expect.

DL: That is certainty something to ponder upon. Any last words on e-learning, as you see it?

JT: Just to reiterate, the direction any e-learning provider would want to take is to build a strong



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