

Tech Experience Day

25 Jan 2017

A very good afternoon to everyone. Welcome to our university's inaugural Tech Experience Day.

Technology is omnipresent in modern day living. Children intuitively use smart phones and tablet computers, and to our NUS students, virtual reality devices, are common tools in their gaming and social media activities. Technology has come a long way and it pervades every sphere of our lives; we shop, pay, blog, read news, source for info, get directions, plan our schedules, play games, take selfies to create memories, connect with friends and acquaintances, and so on, with our mobile devices.

Since 2013, NUS, under the leadership of President Tan Chorh Chuan, had created the learning innovation fund-technology, abbreviated to LIFT. This \$5 million fund has been judiciously used to fund learning innovations using technology in NUS, ranging from serious games, smartphone apps, to web-based games and tech tools. Examples include Dr Soo Yuen Jien's Archipelago, which is a lightweight web-based application created to inject interactivity into classes, and Associate Professor Damith Rajapakse's PowerPointLabs, a free PowerPoint plugin to ramp up the quality of PowerPoint slides. LIFT has also supported the establishment of Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs) with Coursera and our own internal blended online courses that are running on IVLE which we call iBLOCs.

We do not adopt technology blindly; technology is a means to achieve a greater outcome. I am reminded of Mark Twain's aphorism that "to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail". We must not eschew traditional, tried and tested teaching methodologies for the sake of the cool factor. On our part, when assessing LIFT proposals, my task force has been mindful of learning effectiveness, outcomes and pedagogy, rather than merely being attracted to fancy gadgets or tech for its own sake.

Moving forward, my team has tried to explore new technologies, some of which are being featured here. From Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and HoloLens, which provide the wow in immersive virtual and augmented realities, to 360-degree cameras and the means to use 360 degree images and videos to create teaching tools. There are also touch brushes and other gadgets. We hope you will gain ideas on what is out there, what the possibilities are, and that you will be inspired to explore how these advances could be applied in your teaching endeavors, to raise the quality of student engagement, understanding and experience.

Once again, thank you for coming, and have a pleasant and fruitful afternoon.