

The Singapore Perspective

Universities adopting 'flipped classroom' learning

Introducing free online courses, converting facilities to suit "flipped classroom" learning, and exploring new pedagogies that leverage on mobile technology.

These are some of the initiatives that Singapore universities are working on, as institutions around the world find new ways to accommodate students' changing learning habits.

Institutions here are not commonly known as trendsetters, but they are usually early adopters of educational developments.

Local universities such as the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) are among those riding on the popularity of massive open online courses.

They launched a number of such courses on online learning

platforms such as Coursera two years ago, to enable more people to benefit from their educational offerings while building their global presence.

Students who are enrolled in the universities may even earn academic credits through these online courses.

The unconventional flipped-classroom idea has also made its way into institutions here.

NTU, for example, introduced the flipped classroom in its renaissance engineering and medicine programmes, and the approach will be rolled out progressively for other courses.

In March this year, the university unveiled a \$45-million learning hub – composed of 12 eight-storey-high towers of stacked, rounded rooms – to support the teaching method.

Each of the building's 56 "smart" classrooms comes equipped with flexible clustered seating, electronic whiteboards, multiple LCD screens and wireless communication tools.

Other universities here are also adopting unique approaches.

Students at the Singapore University of Technology and Design learn in 220 sq m modular classrooms – also known as cohort classrooms – which, unlike traditional fixed classrooms, can be partitioned into smaller rooms for learning activities.

At the Singapore Institute of Technology, prospective students in the new occupational therapy degree course, which will be launched next year, may be able to take their own mobile devices into the exam halls. Students will be

assessed on how they look for information on a particular health condition within a short period of time and how they apply that information while keeping to the practices taught in class.

The Singapore Management University (SMU) last year introduced the SMU Labs, which will be used to teach modules where students learn through real-world projects with organisations. Shifting the focus to self-learning, the university is rolling out six modules such as internal auditing in the upcoming academic year.

These recent developments in Singapore are promising, and may well contribute to the diversity of educational offerings here.

Calvin Yang



The \$45 million learning hub unveiled by NTU in March this year. Composed of 12 towers of stacked, rounded rooms, the hub is aimed at supporting the university's "flipped classroom" approach.
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