



Educational blogging: A Malaysian university students' perception and experience

Helena S. Y. Song and Yuen May Chan

Faculty of Creative Multimedia

Multimedia University

The explosion of technological growth with Web 2.0 applications and more recently, Web 3.0, has open up new and exciting learning possibilities. There is a growing body of literature on weblogs or blogs as an effective learning tool in higher education. While evidence has shown that educational blogging is not a new phenomenon, the use of blogs in teaching and learning in higher education particularly in Malaysia is still at its infancy. Hence, this study is a preliminary attempt to gather data and information on educational blogging that is significant to the Asian culture, particularly multicultural Malaysia and its potential to be a transformational technology for teaching and learning. The findings shows that while the acceptance of the use of blogs as learning tool among Malaysian students were encouraging, there are some challenges to be considered when using the blog as a learning tool.

Keywords: educational blogging, learning tool, Malaysia

Introduction

The issue of unemployment of our graduates has been a bane for the Malaysian government. It has been reported in 2006 that 70% of graduates from public universities, 26% from private higher learning institutions and 34% of those graduated from foreign universities are still jobless (Suresh, 2006). Factors commonly cited for unemployment of our local graduates are lack of communication and critical thinking skills (Ambigapathy & Aniswal, 2005) and not able to work in a team (Nurita, Ainon, & Shaharudin 2007). In one research study carried out in a public university, lecturers that were interviewed find that in general, student's performance and abilities have been gradually decreasing over the years (Ambigapathy & Aniswal, 2005). They remain passive learners, accepting what is given without any questions. Opportunity for students to interact, debate and discuss is further reduced with the increasing number of students in each class. These learning activities are essential to develop communicative, collaborative and critical thinking skills.

The explosion of technological growth with Web 2.0 applications and more recently, Web 3.0, has open up new learning possibilities for these students. There is a growing body of literature on weblogs or blogs as an effective learning tool in higher education. The suggested potential benefits that were highlighted seems to match the skills lacking in Malaysian graduates: fostering collaborative activities (Oravec 2002, Tretiakov, Kashek & El-Qawasmeh 2007), development of higher order thinking skills (Farmer, Yue & Brooks 2006, Ferdig & Trammel 2004), encouraging reflective thinking (Herring et.al 2004, MacColl et.al 2005, Oravec 2002), facilitate effective communication (Farmer & Bartlett-Bragg 2005, Winer 2003) and promote interactivity and active learning (Ferdig & Trammel 2004).

Blogging in the classroom: Does it work?

Several research studies on educational blogging promises better learning opportunities, promotes reflection and heightens communication and collaboration. In their research study on blogging, Williams and Jacobs pointed out the potential lies in the fact that blogs provide students with "high level of autonomy" and provides greater opportunity for interaction among the students (2004, p.245). They also found that the students were highly positive of the use of blogs as a learning tool, increased interactivity and reflective activities. In another notable study, Ferdig & Trammel (2004) strongly suggested that compared to asynchronous discussion forums, blogs are more effective in increasing interactivity that is conversational. The authors added that in this conversational atmosphere, student-teacher relationship is more likely to improve. Active learning and higher order thinking is also augmented in this environment.

They also observed that blogs provide a space for students to reflect and publish their thoughts with “opportunities for feedback and potential scaffolding of new ideas” (Ferdig & Trammel 2004, p.2).

While there has been great celebration about educational blogging, there is equal discontentment with it. Couple of practitioners who have used blogs in their class expressed their disapproval. One educator shared that her “students are confused by them, unable to write, paralysed with fear of blogging, or they are already light years ahead of the class with their own LiveJournals which have all the bells and whistles” (Remmell 2004). Another expressed his failure, stating “I am as excited about the uses of blogs in my own writing and teaching as any of these other innovators. But after a failed experiment in teaching with blogs, I have begun to wonder if it is advisable or even possible to see blogs as a collaborative or especially “interactive” writing environment.” (Krause 2004).

O’Donnell (2006) however observed that the majority are just barking up the wrong tree. Instead of focusing on evaluating blogs as a communicative technique, he argued that “to leverage its full educational potential, blogging must be understood not just as an isolated phenomenon, but as a part of a broad palette of ‘cybercultural’ practices which provide us with both new ways of doing and new ways of thinking” (p.2). He also suggested that blogging should be used throughout the whole period of the degree course, cutting across classes rather than using blogs for a specific assignment or isolated single semester (O’Donnell 2006).

While evidence has shown that educational blogging is not a new phenomenon, the use of blogs in teaching and learning in higher education is still at its infancy, particularly in Malaysia. Research in this area is even scarcer. A quick search on prominent research databases could testify that. Hence, this study is a preliminary attempt to gather data and information on educational blogging that is significant to the Malaysian or Asian culture and its potential to be a “transformational technology for teaching and learning” as hailed by Williams and Jacobs (2004, p.232).

Therefore, the research questions addressed in this paper are three-fold:

- a) What are the students’ general perceptions of using the group blog as a learning tool?
- b) What are the students’ general perceptions of using the group blog as a reflective and communication tool?
- c) What are the advantages and limitations perceived by students in using group blog as a learning tool?

Methodology

Participants

This research project was implemented across the whole cohort of entry level students with a total of 118 students. This liberal arts course is offered in the foundation year of the Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University. It is compulsory for all entry level students to register for this course. Data were collected from the participants on a voluntary basis through an online questionnaire. 104 students responded and gave their feedback at the end of the semester. From this group of participants, 62 (59.6%) of them claimed to have used a blog before this blog assignment and 47 (45.2%) own a personal blog of which 16 (34%) of them said they are active bloggers. The whole cohort has not use nor experience an assignment or class project using the blog before this study was done.

Method

Media Culture, a liberal arts course, is an entry level course with a large number of students (>100). The course topics cover issues and themes on culture and media. It is a content-rich course with students having to digest great amount of information at every lecture. With a limited number of instructors allocated for the course, it is quite a heavy task to facilitate active and effective face to face sessions with the students. Students’ engagement was found limited only to a few especially in a large group setting. This similar scenario has been highlighted by Farmer, Yue and Brooks in their research dealing with large-cohort first year students (2007). The potential problems of conventional large classroom and issues of passivity, information overload, decreased motivation, feelings of isolation and alienation among students in this study mirrored that of theirs. To further complicate the situation, majority of the students come in directly from high school of which the “spoon-feeding” mentality is still very much ingrained in them. It is also important to note that even though this course was fully conducted in English, all of the students are not native English speakers.

Previously, this course takes on a blended approach pedagogy, using face to face methods (lectures) and the university's own learning management system (LMS) such as online notes, discussion board, learning objects, and chat, to counter the limitations of conventional classroom mentioned above. As an extension, it was hope that the group blog would further facilitate communication, interaction and reflection among the students in the form of a group blog assignment.

This group blog assignment covers 12 weeks of the semester and contributes 20% to the final grade of this course. Students were asked to form a group of 7-8 people and create a group blog. As the university does not have blog facilities within its LMS, Edublogs, a free blog publishing system designed for the education arena was used. Each member of the group was assigned as "author" of the group blog while the project leader assumes the role of the administrator of the blog. Specific media culture issues and concepts were deployed every week for reflection, debate and discussion. Students were told to set the group blog environment as relax and informal as possible. The students were free to interact and reflect in conversational style throughout the weeks with the exception of one final critical review at the end of the semester. Students were also made compulsory to comment on at least two of their group members' critical review. Other stipulations were also given such as: having to post at least one reflective response and three casual or informal responses per-week and posting and sharing links or article related to the issue or concept. Besides that, students were informed of the rationale and objective of the group blog assignment that is to: expose students to current media culture issues concepts, foster critical and reflective thinking skills, encourage self-directed learning, and encourage peer to peer learning and communication. Clear assessment criteria were given which includes clarity of content, appropriate info, relevancy of discussion; comment or reference to discussion posted by other members; and reference to scholarly articles or books related to the issue or concept.

Data collection method

An online questionnaire survey was administered at the end of the semester to collect primary data from the participants. The questionnaire was divided to several sections: 1) Demographic and Students' previous blogging experience, 2) Students' general perceptions on using group blogs as a learning tool, 3) Students' general perceptions on using group blogs as a reflective and communication tool, 4) Students' general perceptions on the advantages and limitations of using the group blog. The survey consists of both closed and open-ended questions to encourage more detail feedback from the participants.

Results and Findings

104 out of 118 students (88%) responded to the online questionnaire. Closed and open-ended questions solicited students' perceptions on using the group blog as a learning tool. A 5-point Likert-type scale was employed with 1 to 5 representing for "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree". Key results and findings will be addressed according to the several sections of the questionnaire.

First section includes demographic and previous blogging experience. Second section seeks feedback on students' general perceptions in using the group blog as a learning tool. Table 1 summarises the results. Third Section focus was to gather data on students' general perceptions in using the group blog as a reflective and communication tool. Table 2 summarises the results. Students were also asked to list down the advantages and limitations in using the group blog. Quantitative data via open-ended questions were also collected after each section. Additional open-ended questions were also asked to gain more insights from the students.

In general, we can summarise that the students are quite positive about using blogs as a learning tool. 57.8% of the students said that they enjoyed using the group blogs as a mode of learning while 63.5% said they enjoyed reading and learning from it. 62.5% of the students found it easy to use the group blog in the assignment. Students were also asked to describe their experiences and opinion on using the group blog as a learning and assessment tool. Comments are shown below and are categorised into several themes.

Accessibility and flexibility

Most of the students mentioned that it is convenient as they can access the blog 24/7 at their own pace. They appreciated the fact that they can do it anytime, anywhere.

Table 1: General perception on using the group blog as a learning and assessment tool

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|--|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|
| I enjoyed using the group blog as a mode of learning | 4 (3.8%) | 12 (11.5%) | 28 (26.9%) | 50 (48.2%) | 10 (9.6%) | 3.48 |
| I enjoyed reading and learning from other group members' comments and ideas. | 3 (2.9%) | 7 (6.7%) | 28 (26.9%) | 50 (48.1%) | 16 (15.4%) | 3.66 |
| I find it easy to use the group blog in this assignment. | 3 (2.9%) | 11 (10.6%) | 25 (24%) | 55 (52.9%) | 10 (9.6%) | 3.62 |
| I would like to do an assignment using a group blog again. | 3 (2.9%) | 16 (15.4%) | 38 (36.5%) | 37 (35.6%) | 10 (9.6%) | 3.34 |
| I am motivated to do this assignment compared to other written assignments. | 5 (4.8%) | 12 (14.4%) | 32 (26%) | 38 (38.5%) | 17 (16.3%) | 3.47 |

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Blog can access any time any where.

Great...I think student usually busy with other activity...with blogging as their assignment...they have their own time to do it...

The blog can be a quite effective learning tool as we can share our assignments at anytime
Well I have no objections since you can access it most of the time at your own leisure
Up-dated...easy to access.

I think it is an innovative way...it's nice to know that we can just post anytime we want
Freedom for us to post any comment, point and our research result helps us to learn.

Through this learning blog, student can pick their most suitable time and place to study.

It's a good learning tool as it is updated frequently and practical

Can be retrieved and access easily by students.

It's much easier. As I mentioned earlier, no need to sit in a group to do the assignment.

...it is also very easy for me to do my work as I can do it wherever and whenever I want.

For me it is easy because it is online and everyone got internet connection.

Sharing learning resources and access to different opinions

Sharing information and having access to other group members' opinions were some of the top reasons why they viewed the group blog as an effective learning tool. This mirrors the findings of Ferdig and Trammell (2004). They reveal that "blogs provides opportunities for diverse perspectives, both within and outside of the classroom" (p.4). This can be seen evidently from the comments below:

Blog let us see another opinion from my friends.

We can learn different culture, peoples thought and many more...

We are sharing information

We were able to communicate and discuss more with group members

It is good as a learning tool especially when virtually anyone who have access to the Net can actually share their piece of cake and argue, discuss or whatever about it.

We can hear opinions from other bloggers. It helps us deepen out understanding about one topic or various ones. We know how people think from different aspects and perspective.

Good form of learning tool to help broaden our knowledge and learn the skills of communication.

Blog helps me to understand things.

Blog can be a learning tool because there is shared information between members in it.

Promote sense of belonging, self-confidence and opportunity to express opinion

As entry level students, the group blog seems to be able to promote a sense of belonging for some of them and increased their self-confidence. It also creates an equal opportunity for them to express their opinion unlike in conventional face-to-face large classrooms.

It is interesting to use a blog since the groups were able to discuss everything together.

We can share our personal idea with the other group member.

Well, I think it is a useful tool in helping a student to express their opinion...

It can let me learn how to online find some research and post it at my blog, using this blog, I am learning many new things that I never try before.

Through blog, we can learn more when we do research before we post our comments because we have enough supporting details to build up our confidence before we post our comments.

It helps me improve my English and at the same time I get to learn new terms and new ideas from my member.

Interactive, interesting and fun

Students' feedback also revealed that they see the group blog as a new, fun and interesting way to learn. Several of them commented that they find it refreshing.

It is rather easy and fun learning way since most of the new generation would like to do things online because it is easier.

Actually, this method is interesting, because it's a new way of learning for me. It's paperless, so decreased our low-student-budget.

I think it is quite fresh and interesting. I enjoy using a blog as a learning tool.

Fun and interesting.

It could work because lots of people blog and they might find it interesting.

It's a new way of learning and quite interesting way of learning.

In my opinion, by using the blog as a learning tool is more easy and fun.

It's very fresh and interactive.

I think it's fun new way of learning. It is not boring as learning at class which sometimes makes me feel sleepy.

Preferring discussion board/forum to blogs

While majority of them accept the group blog as a learning tool, about 2.8% of them prefer to use the discussion board. One of the reasons could be due to technical barriers for those new to blogging. Below are some of their comments as to why they prefer discussion board.

Maybe it will be better if the question is more specific and more like a discussion board. I think it will be more fun if it was a forum instead where everyone actually discuss together.

In my opinion is better to do like forum then a blog.

Compared with discussion board, I think blog is still new as a learning tool. Discussion boards are specially designed for discussion, thus they have more functions that's more focused on it. For example, you can easily quote others' replies, don't need to copy and paste by yourself or make a note that you're referring to which post. Perhaps I feel that way because I'm more familiar with discussion board and it always have better discussing atmosphere.

Other interesting comments

There were also some interesting comments worth looking into. Some were not very enthusiastic about using blogs for their assignment. These may give some insights for future implementation of using group blogs in classes. One particular student pointed out the issue of authenticity of postings and how easy it is for students to cheat.

It is really good FOR THE ONES WHO REALLY WANT TO LEARN SOMETHING. If somebody just want to go to university and pass the exams and get his/her degree, nothing will be good. There are many people really don't care about education or a specific issue, so they just do it to pass, not to learn...and that is the problem, not with the weblog, but with the people.

I think it is not a good way, because many people tend to do other things when they go online, so they may not have the motivation to do the assignment or go into the learning process in blog.

It may be good idea but it is tiresome to look at text on screen for over a long period.

It is a natural opportunity for students to learn more when blogs are used for assignments.

Since blogs are used through the internet, it would afford even the laziest student the change to easily browse the Internet and get relevant information about the topic he is working on.

I think it is convenient, but I do not like to be forced to blog. I actually avoided my blog ever since doing this assignment. I lost any interest that I had before to blog.

Blog can be a very useful item as a learning tool. But the lecturers wouldn't be able to know if the students were the ones who were actually posting it or it was someone else. I mean, anyone can just log in and reply a post if they know the password and login ID.

Table 2: General perception on using the group blog as a reflective and communication tool

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|
| I am motivated to reflect more before posting my comments. | 2 (1.9%) | 8 (7.7%) | 40 (38.5%) | 48 (46.2%) | 6 (5.8%) | 3.46 |
| I am motivated to do more research before posting my comments. | 1 (1%) | 6 (5.8%) | 34 (32.7%) | 50 (48.1%) | 13 (12.5%) | 3.65 |
| I am motivated to find out more after reading the postings on the group blog. | 0 (0%) | 9 (8.7%) | 37 (35.6%) | 51 (49%) | 7 (6.7%) | 3.54 |
| I am motivated to analyse the comments posted on the group blog rather than just accepting them. | 0 (0%) | 7 (6.7%) | 27 (26%) | 61 (58.7%) | 9 (8.7%) | 3.69 |
| I enjoyed interacting with group members on the group blog. | 0 (0%) | 5 (4.8%) | 30 (28.8%) | 56 (53.8%) | 13 (12.5%) | 3.75 |
| I am motivated to share my knowledge with group members on the group blog. | 0 (0%) | 3 (2.9%) | 31 (29.8%) | 57 (54.8%) | 13 (12.5%) | 3.77 |
| I am motivated to voice my opinion on the group blog when I agree or disagree with group members' comments. | 0 (0%) | 3 (2.9%) | 28 (26.9%) | 59 (56.7%) | 14 (13.5%) | 3.81 |

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

In general, the students perceived that the group blog motivated them to reflect and analyse more. About half of the students (52%) found that they reflected more before posting their comments while only 1.9% strongly disagreeing with this statement. 60.6% of the students were motivated to do more research before posting while 55.7% of the students were keen to find out more after reading their group members' postings. A large number of them (67.4%) found that there were motivated to analyse the comments posted by their group members rather than just accepting them. This is a surprising finding because from previous experiences, entry level students in this faculty were often found to readily accept information without many questions. This finding is similar to the observation by Oravec (2002) that suggests blogs empowers and encourage students to become more analytical in their thinking.

Results also show that the group blog encourages communication among the students and promotes peer learning. When asked if they enjoyed interacting with the group members in the blog, more than half of the students (66.3%) were found either agreeing or strongly agreeing. Quite a number of them (67.3%) were also found motivated to share their knowledge with others in the blog. Again this concurred with Oravec's observation of blog as an effective tool for promoting collaboration through sharing of resources and information (2002).

About 70.2% of the students were either agreeing or strongly agreeing to the view that they were motivated to voice their opinion on the group blog. This is another significant finding because in most of the face to face lectures for this course, when students were asked to express their opinions, many were uncomfortable and unable to do so. Contrary to this finding, most of the students were found to be passive learners in the traditional classroom, quietly taking down notes and needed to be coaxed to ask questions or give an opinion.

Finally, the students were asked to list down any advantages and limitations that they found while using the group blog in their assignment. The main advantages that the bulk of them stated were the ease of use, accessibility and flexibility. Another important advantage expressed was communication among the students and development of a community of practice. Some of the comments given were:

Strengthen relationship.

Can post our personal idea anytime, can chat with my group member also while doing my blog assignment.

We share knowledge ... and so many information news

Sharing is made simple in this assignment.

Resource sharing is easy, not time consuming, can be a positive way of getting feedback.

I could learn more, interact with my group members and got a lot of knowledge.

Using this blog, I can share my research to all my members and I also can get the latest information from my members.

I can interact with other members of the group as a whole.

We can see how others' views differ from our personal opinion and hence gain the extra knowledge.

Blog is easier to share your ideas to a group of people. It is better way of communication. I found more comfortable than writing an essay. You can agree or disagree with other peoples comment and also you can see other peoples comment about your post. By this way it sharpens our knowledge.

Apart from the opportunity to post comments at my own time, it has also been a privilege for me to appreciate more the different opinion of people.

Compared to written assignment, you can see the real discussion.

I learn better by sharing ideas among others.

Find new perspective of our topic.

Another valuable finding is that the group blog provides the avenue for students who are struggling or uncomfortable to voice their opinion in person. One of major reasons could be the lack of competency in the English language. They may be embarrassed and lack self confidence to speak in class. Even though all the courses in the faculty are taught in English, all of the students are not native English speakers. This concurred with the findings of MacColl et.al (2005), affirming that blogs provides an alternative voice for students who were not native English speakers. This is also evident in some of their comments:

It is easier for me to share my ideas and knowledge as I am more comfortable with writing/typing than speaking.

It's easy to voice out your opinions than speak it face to face.

For people who are not good at speaking out their opinion in public, a blog offers them an opportunity to convey their thoughts without having to come in contact others face to face.

When asked to list down the limitations of using the group blog, many stressed the problem of logging in and other technical difficulties. Farmer, Yue, & Brooks (2007) suggests a fully scaffold lab session to ensure accessibility to the tool at least once and to provide adequate technical support. This could minimise the students' frustration and distraction from the real task at hand. Below are listed some of their comments:

I always have difficulty logging in and have connection problem.

It is very hard to log in, and the log in time takes a lot of time.

Sometimes poor connection speed make the whole blogging process slow down.

Sometimes error may occur while trying to post and all our contents gone and we have to retype everything.

Logging in definitely, don't know how to use it.

Difficulty posting (there were occasions when me and my friends were unable to post our comments).

Can't log in occasionally, due to internet downtime service.

Failed to log in to website.

Problem with difficulty to log on into the blog or post up other type of file like picture etc.

Difficulty in arranging the posts.

Server sometime slow, making it hard to access.

Another limitation that was significant was that some of the students were new to blogging and needed technical support:

No experience of blogging at all.

At first don't know post my comment at which part.

We have signed up for three weblogs until we could come up with one of them working almost properly.

I am not familiar with blogging, therefore I did not find them interesting. I have to ask a lot just how to post a message.

Find some difficulty in posting message. Many of my friends have no idea of how to use the blog. Even registration have a lot of problems.

We have difficulties to creating a blog. Some of them were not familiar with blogging.

My group had to change our blog because the initial one created by the group leader could not be accessed by all the members. After consultation with the lecturer, a new blog was created and all members were able to get in and post their comments.

The difficulties I experience was controlling my group members spam messages. My group members comment often hidden under the spam comments. So they thought I did not approve their post and they have to redo it again and again.

Others cited lack of participation from group members, frustration with group members and not motivated or lazy to post comments, and distraction as some of the limitations. Comments were given such as:

Last minute update from group members, so I can't response on their comments.
Tend to make use more lazy and will usually forget about an assignment like this.
Since it is online, we might always get distracted by other stuff.
We needed more cooperation among group members and it is hard to control people since it is not face to face.
Always get distracted by other stuff in the internet during research.
Lack of participation and don't receive any frequent response from other students while discussing certain topics.
Students won't care much about the assignment as there's no physical assessment by the lecturers.
It has not physical contact with students, which sometimes make them feel lazy to do the assignment.
Some group members seems not that active.
Sometimes there is lack of group work. Sometime students are not interested to write blogs.
They forgot about that. I saw my group mate didn't understand the topic.
The blog interface is difficult, my blog leader also didn't upload the categories on time, making me less motivated to do it.

Discussion

While the acceptance of the use of blogs as learning tool among Malaysian students were encouraging, there are some challenges to be considered. Drawing from the findings of this study, there are a number of significant challenges that one might want to look into before embarking on using the blog in the higher education especially in the context of Malaysian universities.

Firstly, for non native English speakers, the lack of motivation for participation could be due to their lack of competency in the language. Consider fully scaffolded tutorials to support weak students or developed a buddy system, pairing one with good proficiency in English with another weak student. Some of the students were found not commenting or interacting as they do not fully understand the topic discussed or postings that were posted by other students. Constant feedback is also important from lecturer in addressing queries and problems face by the students.

Secondly, blogging as a learning activity does not necessary guarantee healthy interaction, reflection and communication among students. Blogs should not be seen merely as a technological tool that automatically generates reflection or communication among students. Having experienced over 11 years of school that focused on rote learning and memorising, these students are still trapped in this mode. It would be unreasonable to expect them to reflect and communicate more when thrown into the blog environment. Yet having said that, the unique dimensions of the blog environment might empower these students to open up and encourage them to become more analytical in their thinking as observed by Oravec (2002). In a way, it offers an alternative avenue to express their opinions minus the embarrassment of speaking bad English in front of the class. The experience is less traumatic and less risk, therefore creating a safer environment for making mistakes and taking chances.

Thirdly, especially for entry level students, it might not be a good approach to include and be part of the assessment of the course. Coming from a school environment which heavy emphasises on formal evaluation and examinations, most of these students are extrinsically motivated and are "trained" to gain knowledge just enough to pass exams and get good grades. The fact that the blogging activity is being awarded marks might encourage superficial learning as this study shows. When asked if they were motivated to engage in discussion with group members, about one third gave a negative response. The reasons given were: "Actually no because honestly, none of us really care...no offence...it's just an assignment", "Not really, I treat it like an assignment and not like the other blogs which we can write it in informal response", "I'm not so motivated to have discussion because everybody only want to finish the assignment fast and don't want to do something extra like having discussion", "Not really, busy with other assignments to really discuss in the blog, even then, we just fulfill the requirements". The challenge

is to transform their learning approaches and to create an environment of authentic learning for the students.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the entry level students perceive the blog as a useful and effective learning and assessment tool as well as a reflective and communication tool. This study shows that these students are ready to embrace this tool to be part of their learning environment. However, in order to maximise and leverage the potential benefits of blogging in Malaysian universities, challenges that surfaced within this unique learning culture needs to be addressed first. Further emphasis should be on aligning this tool with the existing curriculum to promote collaboration, communication and critical thinking, skills which are lacking in Malaysian students in general. Ultimately, the goal is to shape Malaysian students to be independent, responsible and proactive in their learning and perhaps, with careful planning, the promise of blogs being the transformational technology in teaching and learning might be fulfilled.

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Authors: Helena S. Y. Song, Multimedia University, Malaysia. Email: helena.song@mmu.edu.my
Yuen May Chan, Multimedia University, Malaysia. Email: mcyuen@mmu.edu.my
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