



Introduction by Mark Swales Chair of the 5th Innovative Learning Spaces Summit

At this years Summit we had over 150 delegates from 19 countries representing 63 different Higher Education institutions and architectural practices. We had in the audience Pro Vice Chancellor's, Rector's, Academic Deans, Heads of Schools, Directors of Estates and Digital Services, Librarians, Chief Operating Officers, Directors of Facilities, Researchers and Architects to name just a few.

This was a very impressive gathering of talented people each with their own perspective on physical and digital learning spaces which over the two days we were able to share and discuss through the presentations and question and answer sessions.

At the 4th Summit held in Barcelona, last year we were presented with a wide range of case studies that described how they approached stakeholder engagement and active participation in the design of learning spaces. We discovered emerging global trends from seven countries and ten higher education institutions. One of the highlights was learning from others successes and failures in the development of innovative learning spaces and the reaffirmation that what many of you are already doing is right. The speakers were very honest in sharing their journeys both the good and the bad. From the feedback we stimulated delegates thinking on how to meet the challenges faced in their own institutions around innovative learning space design and the apparent resistance to change in pedagogical practices. We gained an insight into how to make active learning spaces financially viable and obtaining the evidence to build a compelling case for change.

It is clear that the world is undergoing huge changes in the way we work, communicate, live and learn and we are only just starting to understand what the impact of the pandemic might have. The education sector, not immune to

these changes, has to adapt to the latest technological developments, respond to funding challenges in a post pandemic world and meeting evolving student expectations.

With property being a major cost for universities, developing innovative approaches to how they use physical space, whilst at the same time ensuring that they react to other developments, is essential. This will mean taking a careful look at what space is used for, and what it could also be used from in order to gain the maximum from existing space. Given what we have all just experienced through the pandemic this is even more relevant today.

Day One Summary

We started the day with a presentation from **Michael Keppel Pro Vice Chancellor and Professor, Learning and Teaching** on the development of Taylor University's (Malaysia) educational ecosystem. He described their journey both leading up to the pandemic and the impact it had on their teaching and learning approaches and how this impacted on thinking for future virtual and physical learning spaces. The University placed assessment principles at the centre of its thinking which led to a consideration of what assessment for learning meant in terms of learning space design. Michael described the different types of blended learning that was deployed across study programmes and affordances of spaces and technologies that were then required to optimise learning.

Peter Verbist and Frederick Van de Plas, Project Manager Learning Spaces at KU Leuven provided us with an insight into how KU Leuven University responded to the pandemic. They talked about the sense of urgency that was created and the opportunity this presented to challenge existing practices and thinking of future learning space design. Peter described the approach in developing technology enhanced collaborative learning spaces or hybrid classrooms which supported what they called a Hyflex teaching model. Training of academic staff was critical to support the move to the different class formats. Formats included Class Recording; Live Stream Synchronous with interaction, and Synchronous with interactions. The institution experienced problems with pre booking of learning spaces due to high levels of no shows. This led to a change in booking policy where advance bookings were allowed 48hrs in advance (reduced from 7 days) with a max duration of 4 hours and an automatic cancellation of the booking if the space had not been occupied after 45 minutes. Peter concluded with a list of negative and positive impacts and stated that online learning does not align well with active learning and it is up to the academic staff to bridge that gap.

Duncan Peberdy, former senior lead – Digital Learning Spaces at JISC, brought his expertise to the summit covering the impact investing in digital learning has on learning outcomes. He brought an exciting new development to the summit that delivers affordable flexible technology that brings students in the classroom and those at home into an effective shared learning environment. He stated that at the moment solutions are out there primarily for executive programmes but that they were very expensive. Duncan talked about the need for students to still experience the Campus and a range of social experiences to engender a sense of belonging and identity.

We ended the morning with an interactive session lead by **Anna Donato, Lecturer and Team-Coach for Creative Solutions**, who challenged us to think about our own professional and personal experiences of COVID19. We also learned new ways of engaging participants via on line learning tools such as zoom. The delegates broke out into small groups and used a document supplied by Anna to stimulate a healthy discussion. From the feedback we heard there was many similarities to all our experiences across the globe, which was interesting to hear.

After lunch we heard from **Ulrike Wild, Director of Educational Innovation, Wageningen University**, on the approach the Netherlands is adopting to increase the flexibility of programmes of study. Student life is still hugely influenced by the physical environment but digitalisation gives the opportunity to be independent from time and location – creating accessibility, scalability and connectivity. Ulrike describe the change the University had gone to change and adopt a whole education ecosystem but she asserted that their buildings were still at the heart of the system. She presented four student journeys that responded to different student needs. It is requiring changes across the whole of the educational ecosystem which is not with out its challenges but Ulrike gave us all confidence in the way she responded to all the questions that this was going to be a positive change.

Piet Van Der Zanden, Educational Expert in AV_IT at Delft University of Technology took us next on a journey in the often forgotten aspects of learning space design from the ability to see the screen, to not being distracted by sounds. He described the project at Delft University to address the challenges the institution was facing. This included student growth and development of research. Today new buildings are mono-functional with generic education spaces which are centrally managed and scheduled. Piet demonstrated a software tool that enabled academic staff to check critical education features in planned learning spaces before the architects take the final designs forward. This is available for other institutions to use under licence.

We ended the day with an inspiring presentation from **Marie-Pierre Pausch, Director of Luxembourg Learning Centre, University of Luxembourg**, on reinventing the Library. We learnt how a former industrial site was transformed into the University Campus and in particular the significant impact that the learning centre has had. Marie-Pierre shared with us the many challenges she faced and how the project was values driven covering openness, diversity and flexibility. Placing Values as a key driver for the project had ensured that the outcome remained aligned to the University's teaching and learning vision.

Day Two Summary

Tom Broens, Assistant Professor University of Amsterdam, joined by Bart Steenkamer the architect for the scheme took us on a virtual journey which demonstrated a truly learner centred facility. The beauty of the flexible learning space was its ability to adopt quickly to different learning styles and support longer interactive sessions with learners. To support this academic staff were given workstations in the room so they can continue with other work if required. Tom stressed the importance of good environmental conditions for active learning which aligned with the presentation from the previous day from the University of Delft.

Dan Pearson, Principle and CEO of USP College invited us to experience an immersive learning space that supported multi-campus delivery. We saw the space in action and I was particularly impressed with the positive impact the spaces had on learning outcomes. The use of the technology had assisted in ensuring that where there were low numbers of students for a subject on one campus they could still engage in the subject by linking remotely with a second campus. This led to greater levels of efficiency particular in areas where are staff recruitment challenges in some subject areas. The key takeaway from this case study was that the technology does not have to be overly complex. It is easy to get this wrong so keeping it simple was critical.

Professor Stephen Heppell, Chair of Learning Innovation, Universidad Camilo Jose Cela, case study considered the classrooms of tomorrow. The conversation that Stephen led on was engaging and gave delegates an insight into the future when considering the experiences children have had in their learning during the pandemic and how this could change their perceptions of what they are looking for on their learning journey into the future. Students are the driving force behind the need for change in learning spaces. In the future institutions will either not need the volume of teaching space or have the option to increase

student numbers if this is viable. He describe a notion that “Learning Has Escaped” – the pandemic has created the opportunity for a quantum leap in thinking about teaching and learning. This was reinforced by other cases studies over the two days where delegates felt that the challenges of resistance to change in pedagogical practices had, been to some degree, swept away with the need to move to blended learning. Stephen stated that the classroom for the future was under construction and always would be.

Drew Hardie, Head of Space Management, Manchester Metropolitan University explored a range of space design solutions that improved student outcomes whilst promoting different learning styles across campus. The role that flexible technology has to play was clearly stated including the ability for academic staff to screen cast from lap tops. Flexible technology opened up more opportunities across the campus to deliver learning and teaching activities.

Lis Lack Risager, Education Consultant, University of Copenhagen explored with us the obstacles that can be found in balancing physical and online spaces to enhance learning. She asserted that in the post COVID world teaching and learning is now clearly on the agenda. What came across in this presentation was the need to transfer the agency to students and the experience of an emerging shared narrative of what blended learning really means. Lis described the urgency of the need to combine didactic and technical approaches that emerged during the pandemic. Some of the challenges Lis described included how to engage with student who switched off their camera’s. The solution included encouraging teachers and students to develop a code of conduct so that students were engaged in setting the ground rules. Lis felt that teaching and learning has become a more pivotal issue for the whole organisation.

Uli Blum Consultant, Zaha Hadid Architects investigated the radical opportunities that big data analytics might have on the design of future learning spaces. Uli talked about how the analytic tools can add real value to understand how occupants use the different locations in buildings and how this can be applied to educational settings.

Our final presentation was lead by **Nicola Cameron, Director Property Development and Investment** and **Moira Fischacher-Smith, Professor of Public Management and Vice Principle Learning and Teaching The University of Glasgow**. They demonstrated how they set out to transform the learning experience. And as we Dan’s comments in his presentation this morning on technology it appears that the best approach is to keep it simple. The case study described the extent of stakeholder engagement that had been undertaken and how that influenced the design outcomes for the new facilities.

Summit Summary

Have these two days met delegate expectations? On the first day delegates were asked via Slido.com, two questions. The questions and responses are set out below together with reference to some of the case studies that addressed the issues being raised.

Question 1. In respect of the impact of COVID19 what aspects of demand for learning spaces is likely to experience the greatest level of change.

- 1) Sustained increase in blended learning **84%**
 - a) We heard numerous examples of how the pandemic has created an opportunity for change in pedagogy. Last year delegates stated that creating the case for change was a critical challenge but it appears many institutions are now preparing for what could be a shift in the degree to which online learning is now more integral to programmes of study.
- 2) Planning for a reduction in physical teaching space on campus **26%**
 - a) I think Stephen alluded to this very clearly that for the future education settings will either need less space or will be able to take on higher numbers of learnings.
- 3) Planning more informal teaching space on Campus **46%**
 - a) We heard from several speakers including Drew from Man Met and Peter from KU Leuven the future role of informal learning spaces when thinking about the whole educational ecosystem
- 4) No change **0%**

Question 2. What do you hope to learn from this years summit.

- 1) Learn about institutions experience of dealing with COVID 19 **41%**
 - a) We had some great presentations where speakers shared their institutions response to COVID19. Michael from Taylors University and Peter from KU Leuven described how their institutions had changed approaches in light of the pandemic
- 2) What is going to be the impact on future learning space design post COVID19 **76%**
 - a) We have heard from many speakers over the past two days that there is an opportunity to grasp now in respect of future learning space design. Stephen Heppell pronounced that “Learning has escaped!” and he described a scenario where by listening to children can engender creativity in learning space design. Our future students are the driving force behind the need for change.

3) The latest thinking behind digital learning space design 59%

- a) We had the presentation from Duncan about a recent affordable development in immersive technology to support learnings both on and off Campus. Dan also presented USP Colleges innovative immersive learning spaces that interact across multiple campuses, saving academic costs whilst increasing attainment.

4) The latest thinking behind physical learning space design 70%

- a) And finally we have seen a wide variety of different learning spaces and not forgetting learning centres as well when we were treated to the presentation from Marie-Pierre from the University of Luxembourg.

We learnt a great deal about the challenges institutions across the globe are facing in innovative learning space design in a post COVID world. How important it is to seize the opportunity to change pedagogical practices. On the basis of the feedback I believe this years Virtual Summit has been a great success with informative case studies and extensive debate arising out of the question and answer sessions. My thanks once again to all the speakers and delegates for your participation and to Luxatia for hosting the event.

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