Abstract: The core of this higher education mission is specifically represented by innovation, learning and research in the teaching process. A collaborative environment that inspires collective teaching, learning and research is what we try to accomplish. Danubius T&L working group mission is to drive innovation on teaching and learning within Danubius Online community and to share best practices, to communicate the goals and issues of the teaching and learning community, understanding and experiences among faculty members and among faculties and the most important, other Sakai community members.

Keywords: T&L working group, e-learning, Danubius Online.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sakai Project has been launched through a vivid academic collaboration involving the University of Michigan, Indiana University, MIT and Stanford University. Now, the project includes approximately 100 universities, colleges, and institutes of education around the world, and it stands for a landmark venture meant to create open-source course management, collaboration, and online research support tools for the higher education community [1].

Torgny Roxa and Katarina Martensson on The 17th Improving Student Learning Symposium says: “Teachers’ conceptions of T&L are linked to quality in student learning (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). These conceptions vary, partly by discipline, but also by cultural context (Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006). T&L cultures have been discussed as teaching and learning regimes (TLR) (Trowler, 2009, Trowler & Cooper, 2002). Different TLRs support different conceptions. As in all cultural phenomena everyday talk and communication are the processes where meaning is constructed and maintained (Ancona et al., 2009). In the case of university teachers these conversations take place back-stage (Goffman, 2000) among a few selected colleagues, within significant networks (Roxa & Martensson, 2009). Consequently, cultural change is dependent on displacements in the conversational patterns wherein meaning in relation to T&L is constructed and maintained by university teachers”[2].

Teaching & Learning Group collaborates with various faculties and staff members so as to promote and facilitate the use of technology in the academic environment.

Danubius University’s strategic priorities in Teaching and Learning (T&L) have been endorsed by Academic Senate, and emphasizes the importance of improving the quality of teaching and learning. The T&L priorities are particularly significant, given the acknowledged challenges and the critical importance of an excellent reputation pertaining to the education quality on the marketplace.

Being part of the Sakai Community, Danubius T&L working group area is oriented towards the needs of teachers, instructors, researchers, collaborators, instructional technologists and user support.

It encompasses a broad range of topics, including sharing best practices for teaching and collaborating; asking and answering how various tools and capabilities work; discussing end-user
support materials (e.g., documentation, training, tutorials); connecting with users with similar interests and needs, supporting long-term collaborative efforts, individual projects, and just-in-time teaching, learning, and assessment issues.

II. PROJECT AIMS

The project has had a dual purpose. First, to provide assistance to Danubius Faculties and staff in the continuous improvement of teaching, learning, and assessment and also to create a dynamic learning environment that has enriched our students' experience.

There are many ways in which technology, and in particular Sakai, can increase the efficiency of teaching and learning process making it more efficient. Also, innovative technology applications truly transform the educational experience into real revelation.

The second aim of the project has come subsequent to our investigation of all extant ways in which institutional organizational structures are being shaped to support the enhancement of staff creative capacity aiming at teaching and learning quality ensuring and improvement. We have also tried to create a encouraging and constructive environment that guides students in taking the initiative to assimilate the knowledge through the process of commitment and participation in online sessions.

We try to investigate the way in which we can encourage teaching excellence, augment the professionalism of teaching and learning, support the distinctive features of student experience, and contribute to all initiatives to enrich this experience.

III. T&L STRATEGY

The professionalism and excellence in the experience teaching and learning ensures the quality of learning outcomes. The assuring of a high-quality experience for students involves an environment that gathers an assiduous amount of work as well as creativity and innovation. Strategy does also include originality, inventiveness, scalability, availability of resources, adaptability, and the impact of the project on student learning.

Learning, innovation and engagement are the essential and embedded ways of actions of the University’s mission. In 2009, we assumed a three-academic year Teaching and Learning Project by focusing on success and impact factors:

- Educator’s ability
  - Cultural empathy
  - Adaptableness to the cultural milieu
  - Subject mastery
  - Instructional design
  - Digital literacy
  - Teaching and facilitation
  - Emotional intelligence
  - Lifelong learning
  - Thinking infusion
  - Creativity
  - A full range of teaching programmes
  - Motivation and inspiration

- Student’s readiness
  - Appropriate language ability
  - Cognitive abilities and skills
  - Positive disposition
  - students research
  - group working ability
  - collaborative skills
• Other
  o Policy and institutional support
  o students and staff survey
  o linkages and opportunities with other T&L Communities and special with Sakai Community;
  o economic, legal and professional engagement;
  o modern facilities, libraries and other resources from University.

This Teaching and Learning Project aims to help students, teachers and researchers, and reveals the way in which we collaborate with employers and institutions to improve the learning experience at Danubius University.

The 2009-2012 Teaching and Learning Project is a substantially revised plan intended to anchor Danubius’s position as a genuinely world-class higher education institution being the destination for the very best students. The scope of this project is broad and the goals are significant in an effort to increase performance in teaching and learning to the highest level of excellence.

The 2009-2012 T&L Project has at its centrepiece, the need to identify, promote, and support the unique advantages of the Danubius student competence and experience. Danubius’s capacity is considerable, consisting in an advanced research infrastructure and research outcomes, high quality staff and students, a comprehensive range of programs offered at the level of our university, strong communities linkages and opportunities, a commitment to providing high quality on-university grounds facilities and experiences, the exceptionally well-resourced and highly regarded Danubius Library, and an affiliated network of strong and well-established international Universities.

The guaranteeing of these very capacities underpin a superior student experience that is considerably improved by the University’s research capacity, and is highly ranked in its aims as well as being strongly connected with institutional and professional requests, and all this stands for a real challenge.

The support of a distinctive student experience needs to be sustained by the highest standards of excellence in teaching and an engagement to ensuring a high quality teaching and learning environment that is student-centred and supported by technological infrastructure.

This environment must encompass a considerable amount of professional knowledge that will provide a foundation for later endeavour and support of independent learning and will allow a graduate to adapt to new challenges. To achieve these results we should take into consideration certain priorities.

These priorities are included in Danubius University’s Teaching and Learning Project which identifies three goals for the 2009-2012 academic years:

• Increase all aspects of the teaching and learning environment.
• Support the distinctive features of the Danubius University student experience, and contribute to all initiatives to enrich this experience.
• Encourage teaching excellence, and raise the professionalism of teaching and learning at Danubius University.

3.1 Increase all aspects of the teaching and learning environment

The most important aspect is to continue to assign a high level of priority to teaching platform upgrades and the development of state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces.

To ensure this, these targets are considered:

• Improve technological services and resources for students, faculty, and staff.
• participating in activities focused around observing teaching and learning needs for the next major version of the Sakai collaboration and learning system
• the internet connection is the core of this mission, so it is necessary to ensure that all campuses have the highest level of wireless connectivity possible for any location.
• Promote and support the use of the Collaborative Teaching and Learning platform.
• Stay in contact with Sakai Community to collaborate around building, deploying, and using Sakai.
Being part of this plan, the development of an e-Learning Strategy that facilitates an integrated mixed learning environment using new-generation technologies and final version of software which includes the latest tools. To do that, we must be sure of the following elements:

- Collaboration platform that provides users with a suite of learning, portfolio, library and project tools.
- Increase access to online teaching resources including Danubius Online and other multimedia online resources.
- Increased publicity of existing communication tools such as iDanubius, Chat Rooms and Forum topics included in online courses.

To enhance the quality and rigor of assessment practices and standards, and ensure the provision of high-quality and timely feedback, it is necessary to:

- Revise and further develop documentation/processes including those relating to assessment, course accreditation and re-accreditation.
- Finalise, implement and disseminate the policies and procedures related to assessment.
- Ensure training programs for staff include modules on survey, assessment and feedback.

Focus on improving engagement between staff and students, and keep in touch with other learning communities

- A better analysis of programmes offered by Faculties, enhance communication with new students and support transition programs.
- Evaluate the implementation of Danubius Online platform on every year and review mechanisms for identifying and supporting at-risk students.

Provide the benefits of small group interactions by promoting and supporting innovative teaching practices that actively engage students to use best tools and techniques.

- Provide assistance to enhance the use student-centred learning opportunities in courses.
- Support and promote multiple perspectives, representations, and strategies to development of virtual environments to enhance small group and peer interaction.

### 3.2 Support the distinctive features of the Danubius University student experience, and contribute to all initiatives to enrich this experience

Promote and support opportunities for students to gain international experiences.

- Maximising access and educational opportunity for students.
- Easy access of e-learning educational tools, web-based resources, library & IT resources to support their study.
- Develop action plan to encourage and participate student enrolment in courses offered by the Affiliated Universities.
- Increase student participation in international programs, workshops and conferences.
- Facilitate high-quality academic programs and non-academic interactions between students all over the world.

Provide education and training that engages with and meets the needs of business, professions and occupations.

- Better access to cutting edge of knowledge.
- Better balance between knowledge and skills.
- Support students through effective advisement.
- Accountability, less prone to waste or corruption.
- Challenge student perceptions, listen to their needs
- Maintain coherence with existing staff and structures.

Expand the University’s commitment to research and creative activity, to enriching the learning environment.

- Create and maintain a culture of research and academic publishing.
• Increase the number of publications and resources for producing and disseminating academic work.
• Develop a group of online and campus part-time instructors to teach when T&L group is not available.

Systematically embed target transferable skills into all academic programmes. Consult with stakeholders such as alumni and employers as part of this process. Developing a more elaborate set of relationship possibilities with alumni and others.

3.3 Encourage teaching excellence, and raise the professionalism of teaching and learning at Danubius University

Maintain on focus the need to recognise and gratify teaching excellence, and to recruit and promote staff with a commitment to best teaching practice.
• Optimising staff development opportunities.
• Experiences in Teaching via Feedbacks.
• Processes for appointment, confirmation and promotion of academic staff which incorporate the need to demonstrate teaching excellence is being ensured.
• Launching seminar series to disseminate innovative teaching and learning best practice.
• Encouraging staff participation to international and national conferences.

Improve quality management and enhancement processes for teaching and learning by:
• understanding and dissemination of key teaching and learning performance indicators.
• Including teaching and learning performance indicators into Faculty operational plans.
• constant concern for instruments used to assess teaching and learning outcomes, and improve the accessibility and usefulness of the results.

Ensure that the management of teaching and learning issues and practice are optimal for University and Faculties.
• A better analysis of relationships among major organizational units involved in teaching and learning process and consolidate their links with the Faculties.
• building institutional capacity and support for high-quality teaching and learning by implementing the recommendations of Sakai Development Communities.

IV. Conclusions

The strategic opportunity in the actual development of the T&L process has always been highly informative and supportive of the staff willingness to engage in productive debates. The latter proved to be utterly significant, as appropriate and proficient teaching matters and methods have always resulted in effective student learning, which require adequate preparation and effective delivery in a motivated academic environment.
Adequate preparation requires thoughtful organizing and planning, not just the continuing evaluating and updating of the material content but also the focus of learning activities that are liable to guide students to participate in dynamic and interactive exchanges in a course session. The goal is to assume full responsibility by actively doing everything in a teaching session and help students to adapt to new challenges by refreshing and updating their current level of knowledge and skills to accomplish new roles in learning process.
This study does actually prove that the T&L group techniques are necessary and important to enhance student learning because of actively supporting student attendance and scientific involvement. Our experience, feedback evaluation assessments, course surveys, Chat Room topics and comments have been used to describe the aim of T&L group in this paper.
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