

## **Institutional Management of Project Work, Innovation and Intellectual Property**

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### **Abstract:**

With the advent of the dot.com boom in the mid-1990's, it became increasingly evident the value of intellectual property, not only to start-ups and established organizations, but to universities and community at large. Thus, while more emphasis was done to cultivate enterprise and entrepreneurship (and technopreneurship) with venture and logistical support, the processes of invention and innovation at universities did not go beyond the silos of knowledge. While this might be desirable (perhaps, for commercial viability and exploitation reasons), perhaps what was overlooked was the synergies and critical mass benefits that knowledge sharing could have. This can catalyze and in others, catapult the value add components of knowledge sharing to result in competitive advantage. This can be in the form of shorter developmental times and multi/cross-adaptation of technologies. Such competitive advantages would have immense benefits for the university as part of its intellectual contribution to the increasingly global society that it serves.

The year 2000 saw the introduction of eLearning to the Nanyang Technological University (or NTU). Five years hence, eLearning in its blended form has become an important part of its teaching and learning culture. Building on the implementation of project work in Singapore schools at the K-12 level (in particular Grade 7 and above), NTU explored an extension of eLearning that will move from the original purpose of knowledge transfer (where the instructor assimilates knowledge, and together with his experience and expertise, transfer that knowledge through the information communication technological (ICT) media or in the traditional instructor-led teaching model). Through its eUreka project work management system, NTU has established an automated online system in which project work of students can be managed more effectively. Moving beyond the forerunner of the analogous face-to-face supervision and mentoring processes, it is hoped that this form of effort-based learning by undergraduate students (pursuing their term and final year project), or for post-graduate students (for their Master or doctorate qualification) will enjoy the benefits that technology can offer in their discovery journeys.

While the introduction of eUreka (like eLearning) is not expected to immediately change current practices of project supervision, it is expected to enhance the project work processes through better "blended" supervision and more effective mentoring provisions afforded by its collaborative nature made possible via ICT. Paper printed resources once upon a time organized in a physical file can now be uploaded online in the respective project file repository. Using search and data mining tools, the process of knowledge gleaning and application can be accelerated in a wider field of knowledge resources in a much shorter time.

Project sites can also cater for team work. Group collaboration tools facilitate anytime, anyone, anywhere access for group members in their common project site. Project progress and development of individual students are logged in their respective shareable-controlled weblogs. Unlike the paper project log, the latter can be easily accessed by the supervisor anywhere, anytime and simultaneously with the supervisee students.

Can such an online project work tool make an impact in the pillar of research and development, as eLearning has in the pillar of teaching and learning? Assuredly, the potential is there. In addition to more effective project supervision, eUreka offers the user organization a uniform campus-wide management system of its institutional memory of its intellectual property. Such a concept might have a synergistic and multi-disciplinary impact in the way organizations view intellectual assets, and manage the internal processes of invention and innovation in the future.