

From Traditional to Blended Learning: Increasing Student Engagement

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Highlights:

This paper presents the application of technology-enabled learning using blended learning pedagogy for undergraduate Business Communication (GT00503) subject of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). With the objective of maximizing student engagement in sustained learning experiences, careful planning, and preparation of the assessments, activities, and contents to match the learning outcomes was undertaken. Slide presentations, videos, and articles were uploaded using the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) SMART2 platform. Online lecture, quizzes, and forum discussions were administered to assess students' engagement and performance. Through the online course forums, interactions between student-to-student and student-to-teacher were made possible to validate students' understanding of the subject.

Key words: *blended learning, student engagement, sustained learning experiences, Moodle, SMART2.*

Introduction

Innovations in teaching, emphasizing the use of information communication technology (ICT) for the development of holistic and balanced graduates is one of the main initiatives under the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education). Implementing technology-enabled learning has been extensively promoted in the last decade, at higher learning institutions, in preparing students to face the changing work environment and a competitive global market. With the onset of Industry 4.0, the education industry was further propelled to embrace digital innovations in blended learning (Adams et al., 2018).

Description and Context of Innovation

Blended learning is considered as one of the important pedagogies for the 21st century - a 'mixed-mode' application of online learning and face-to-face (F2F) instruction (Graham, 2013). According to Bleed, 2001, BL is not only integrating technology in traditional teaching, as generally perceived but also involved in designing the course to suit both online and F2F learning. The re-designing of the course in terms of structure, outcomes, assessments, activities, and content need careful thoughts to enable students to engage meaningfully in sustained learning experiences (Vaughan, 2014; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Using Koneru's Blended Learning Design (based on Backward Design Model) framework, the course design for Business Communication (GT00503) for semester 2 session 2018/2019 sees an improved version incorporating both F2F and online learning. Careful planning on the assessments, activities, and contents was undertaken to match the learning outcomes of the course, in optimizing student engagement for sustained learning experiences. The innovation in course design, along with self-created videos and PowerPoint slides were created and developed to engage students in collaborative and cooperative activities, not only in the classroom but beyond (Figure 1 & 2).

Importance of the innovation to education

This innovation is important to education where:

- it will enhance quality teaching and learning by teachers and students;
- the sharing of innovative ideas such as self-created videos, slides, interactive forums and ice breaker will promote student active learning and engagement;
- it will inspire and encourage others to develop teaching materials using current technological developments and
- active learning assignments and online learning activities will engage student for sustainable learning and at the same time develops the student's digital information fluency for lifelong learning.

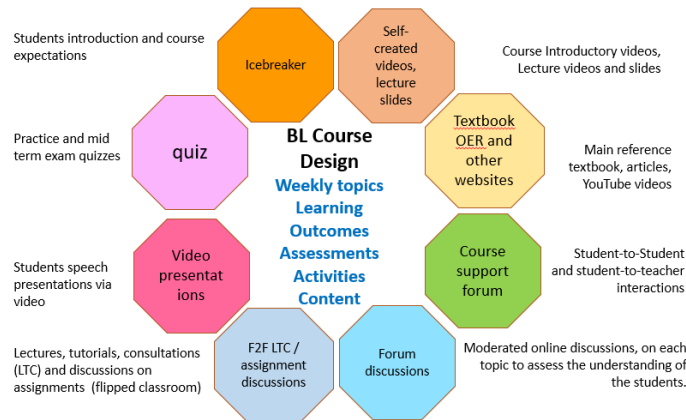


Figure 1: Blended Learning for GT00503

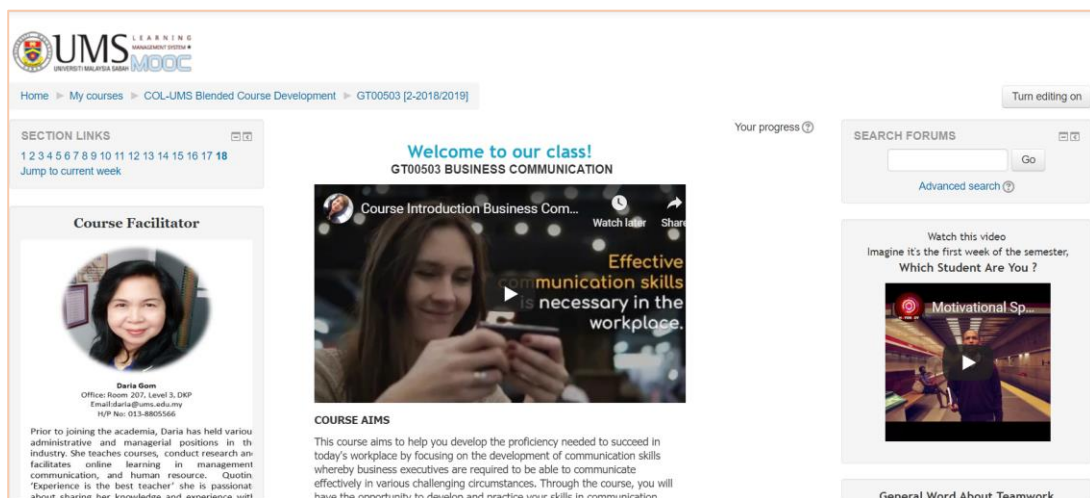


Figure 2: COL-UMS Blended Course Development Website page: GT00503 (2-2018/2019)

<http://smart2.ums.edu.my/course/view.php?id=9777>

Advantages to the student

- Students find this way of learning beneficial as they can go through the materials anytime, anywhere and at their own pace. If they do not understand a concept, they can pause, look for the related information online or post their questions through the course support forum.
- The students find the self-created video and PowerPoint slides notes easy to understand.
- Collaborative and productive discussions facilitated by the teacher during class (flipped classroom) enhance students' engagement and productivity.
- Students can interact with their peers and teachers via the online forum; this has enabled them to engage in a reflective and constructive discourses.
- The online interactions and active learning engage students in sustainable learning experiences and improve their soft skills for lifelong learning.

Advantages to the teacher

- Enhances communication and interactions with students as well as improves digital literacy.
- Grades online assessment (such as a quiz) efficiently, and results made known instantly.
- Allows for flexible teaching - if the teacher is away on a conference or on medical leave, she could still conduct the class through online learning.
- Able to validate student understanding via forums discussion and assessment online.

Commercial Values

This innovation is shared for education as well as for inspiration and encouragement to others who may want to develop a blended learning course and teaching materials. The self-created videos were made available online for anyone to use, subjected to the Creative Commons Attribution license.

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