

# Blended Learning@FEHD - Stories from the Frontline

## ABSTRACT

Constructivist learning pedagogies see learners as “active in constructing their own knowledge”. Constructivist teaching is best understood in terms of how individuals use information, resources, and help from others to build and improve their mental models and their problem solving strategies. Blended learning thus fits well with my philosophy of teaching: engaging learners in an enriched learning environment, and facilitating peer interaction through the creative use of IT to provide scaffolding.

## BACKGROUND: OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY TECHNOLOGIES

### Blended Learning Design Elements:

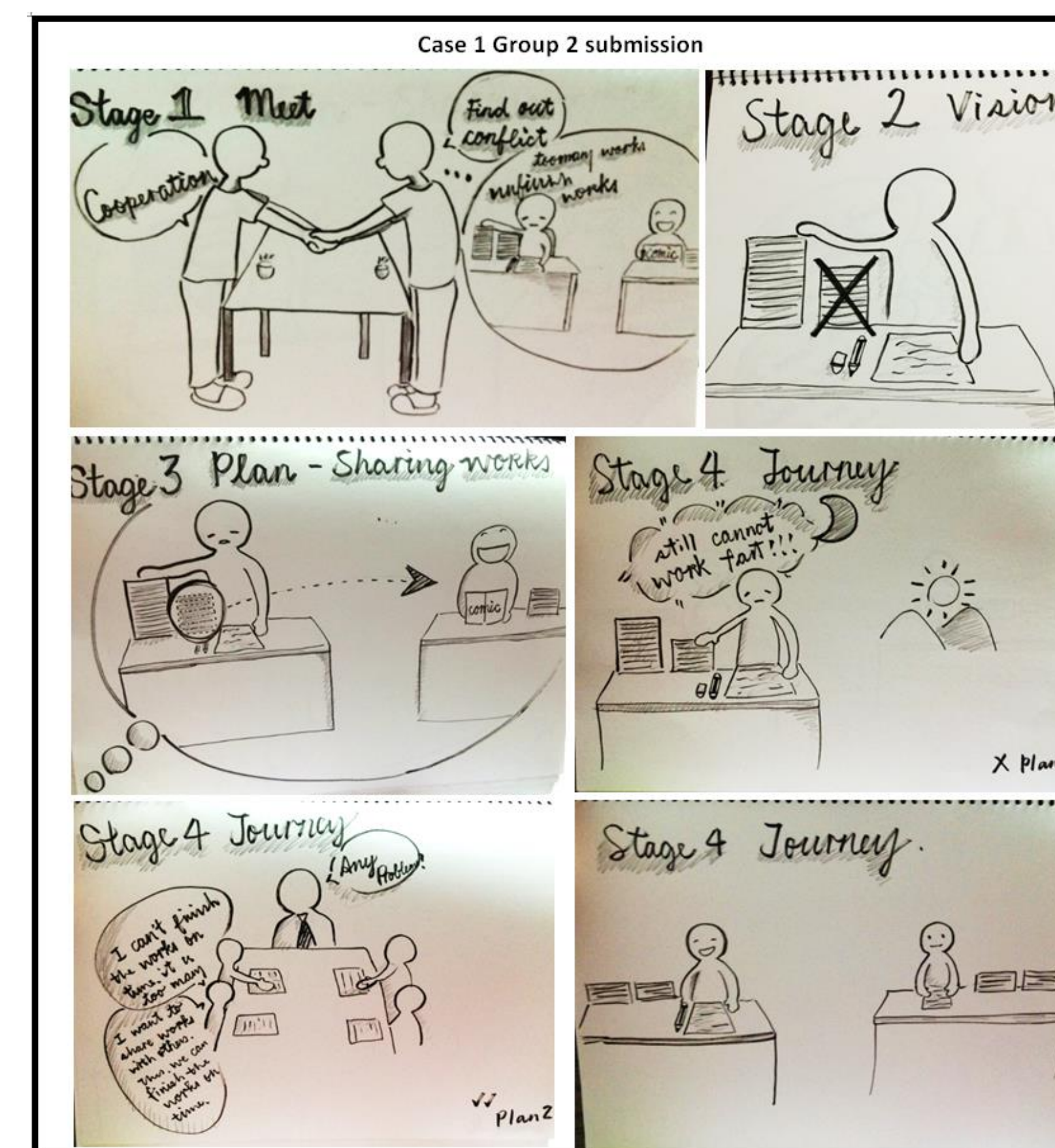
1. Reconsider the curriculum plan to enable the core disciplinary content of each sessions is connective and coherent to the overall disciplinary knowledge.
2. Identify intended learning outcomes for each lesson.
3. Enable a permanent group setting and peer learning mechanism
4. Look for authentic teaching materials
5. Assign pre-reading assignments in every lesson
6. Assign tasks in every session to enable a process of construction.
7. The general principle is to ensure whether this construction reflects objective realities, or the construction is perceived to sharpen one’s cognitive development for acquiring higher-level intellectual development, or the construction of knowledge should happen in a social interactive setting with the mediation of individuals.

### Sample Group and Course (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 2014-2015)

43 year-one students who studied the course titled “Organizational Learning” in a Bachelor degree for Human and Organizational Development, experienced the BL instruction. The group was diverse where differences were found in ethnicity and study background. As year-one students, however, the group appeared to be accommodating, and each of them was seen to be adapting themselves in the new programme as the first cohort. The integrative nature of the course ‘Learning Organisation’ also fits the constructivist pedagogy and use of BL, as personal reflection, practice and rational analysis are involved in the process of learning.

## PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

Sample 1: Each group was assigned to do one of the three tasks. They did not learn the content in class but they were asked to illustrate the features in different forms of expression. Students had discussed their work in class and shared the output within six days after class. Teacher made comment on the submissions online. The materials were used for teaching in the subsequent session to tell about the key professional development strategies for establishing teams in the workplace.



## EXAMPLES OF BLENDED LEARNING

### Sample 2: Group Forums

#### Task B: Sharing and Discussion (within group forum)

Think of the profession you are planning to pursue.

- How the mentioned changes in the greater environment impacted your aspired profession?
- How have the skills required changed?

Please post up your work in relevant forums (group and individual) over the Moodle, latest by next Weds.

by \_\_\_\_\_ - Wednesday, 28 January 2015, 11:55 PM

Another HR here! I am very excited that we have the same goal. More communication with employees and departments is really a significant skill I need to consider more about it. Besides, the relationship between departments is kind of a difficult part since you need to know every departments very well which may take you lots of time and need best effort. We can fight together!

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND OUTCOMES

Based on students’ work outputs, and the self reflection of teacher and students, the BL instruction in this course suggested some positive outcomes. The on-line exercises and group interactive exercises that connects formal classroom learning to after class exploration was considered effective in engaging student participation. The response rate of the group tasks was 100%, over 80% of students were active in individual exercises and group interactions.

Students’ motivation of studying the course was also quite high. Students frequently posed questions to me when they were managing the group exercises, this could not have happened so often in traditional teaching mode. Students mentioned as much as I felt about their eagerness and interest in reading the course materials, this had also been shown in the high attendance rate and total time spent in Moodle activities.

Strands of evidence was found to suggest some positive outcomes related to cognitive aspect of learning on students. By engaging students in a series of outside classroom tasks, it appeared that they were able to grasp some quite abstract knowledge on their own. It shows the connectedness and in-depth understanding of the concepts they learned through construction of knowledge in the BL tasks.

It was not the technology, but the self and group study that make the learning outcomes of these trials positive. The tailor-made curriculum connected the learners and engaged them in active participation, and the intentionally implanted features in a sequence of exercises made the difference. **Blended Learning serves as a useful tool to support the knowledge construction process for learners.**

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- A holistic design of the course curriculum may be necessary if effective BL is to take place
- Student may need to understand their role in a different way.
- Team work and time for personal individual study can be discussed in formal programme meetings, so the values of learning for greater benefits can be shared with students.