BlendedLearning@EdUHK - Stories from the Frontline

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Description/Teaching Philosophy

The following beliefs influence my approach to instructional design:

1. Students learn best when they have the opportunity to interact with to each other around course concepts and aims.

2. Students learn best when they have the opportunity to apply concepts and frameworks to assess real world examples.

3. Student learn best when provided regular feedback and opportunity to improve on their learning.

With reference to the below figure based on Bonk & Brahman (2005) and Gonzalez (2012), I illustrate various approaches to blended learning (BL). I have aimed to move my own BL instruction along the continuum from materials provision (in which technology is often used simply to post lecture materials and readings) towards collaborative and constructivist practices.

| Material Provision	Communication	Thinking & Reflection	Collaboration & construction
• Course outline • Lecture materials • Interview guidelines	• News Forum • Consultation booking	• Final presentations • Ethics Forum • Student visual • Self-Introduction	• Small group discussion
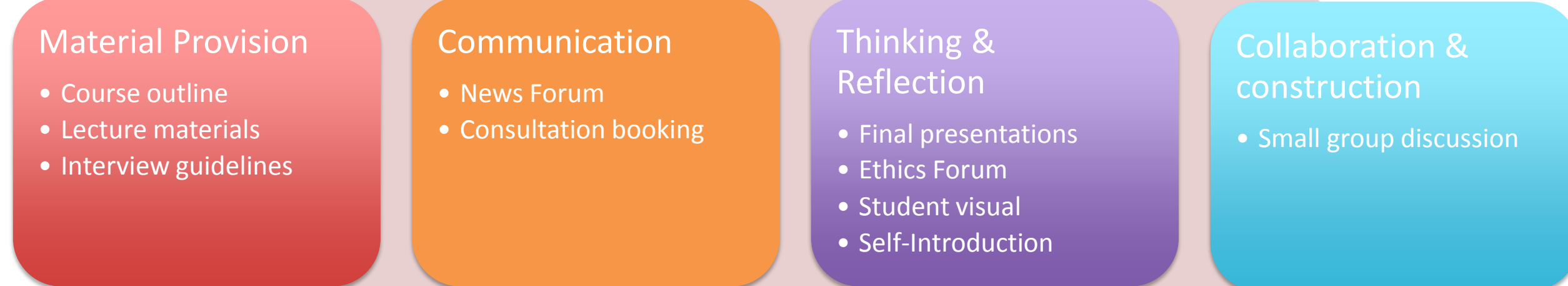
In order to operationalize BL, I have attempted to utilize a online learning activities to support face-to-face instruction. The online activities have been used as:

a) micro-lessons or pre-lesson tasks to introduce concepts that will be used in class;
b) reflective activities based on in-class group discussion and lectures;
c) platforms for peer-to-peer discussion and collaboration;
d) strategies for feedback.

Sample Activities and Artefacts

A. Students viewed micro lessons before class in the form of short videos prepared by instructor. Tasks included: online surveys, discussion board entries, posting of found examples.
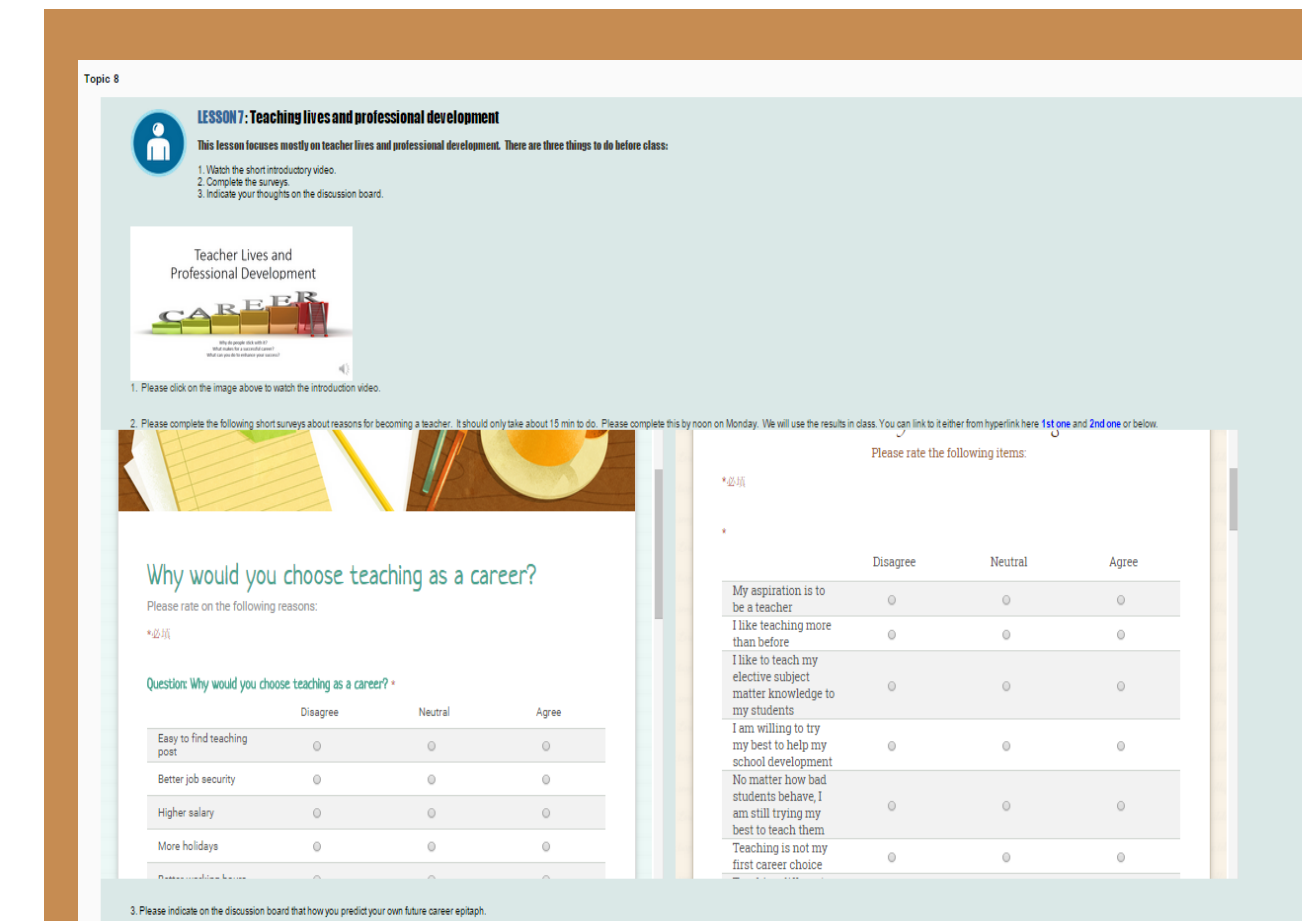

B. Students interact in response to prompts using discussion boards.

C. Students worked in groups to develop an online presentation. Three Blended Learning designs were applied:

1) Students used Google slides to prepare and to give and receive feedback over several developmental stages.
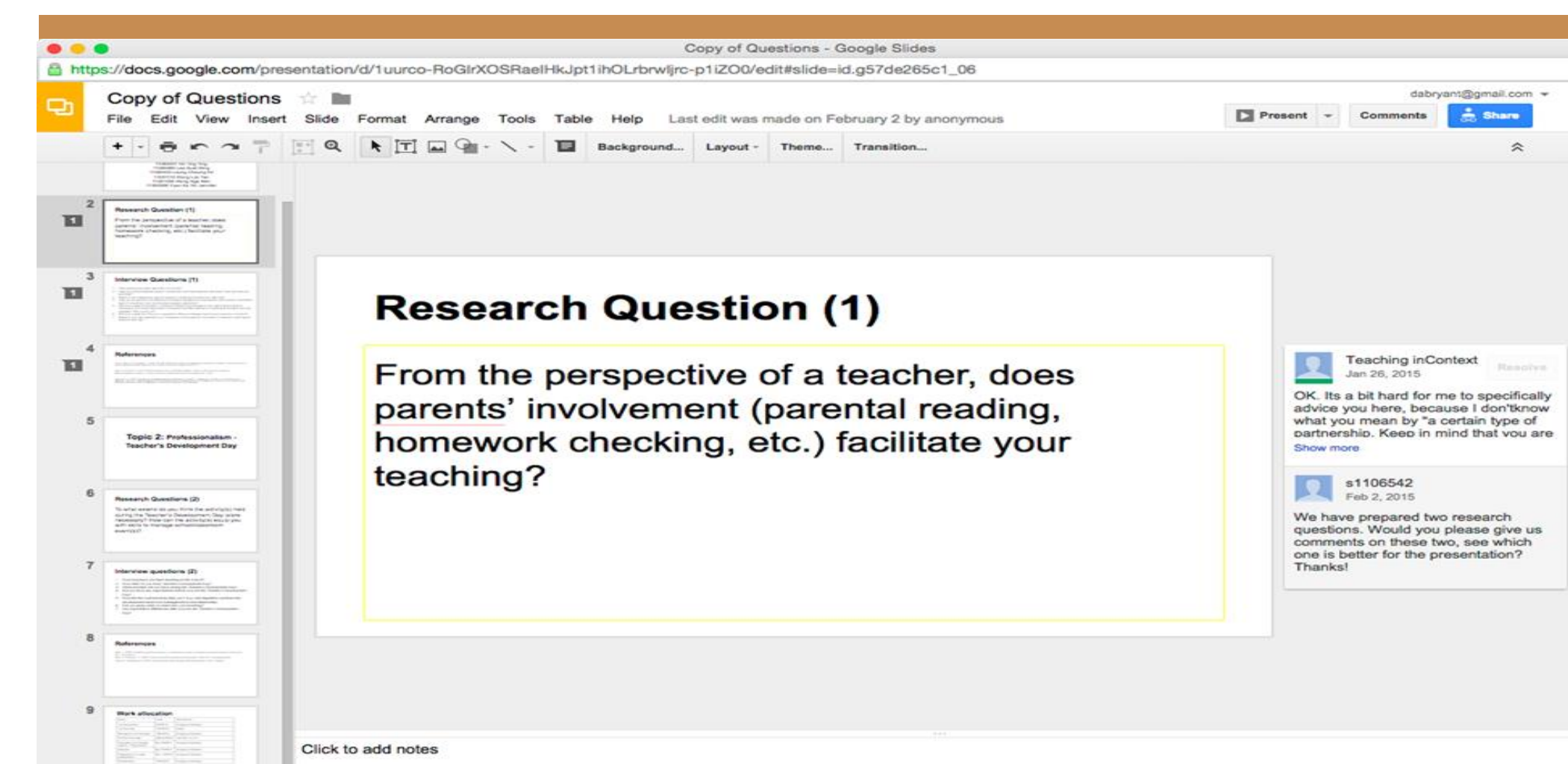
2) Students developed online video presentations, and distributed links to all students.

3) All students peer-assessed each video using an online rubric survey. The results were distributed to the presenters.
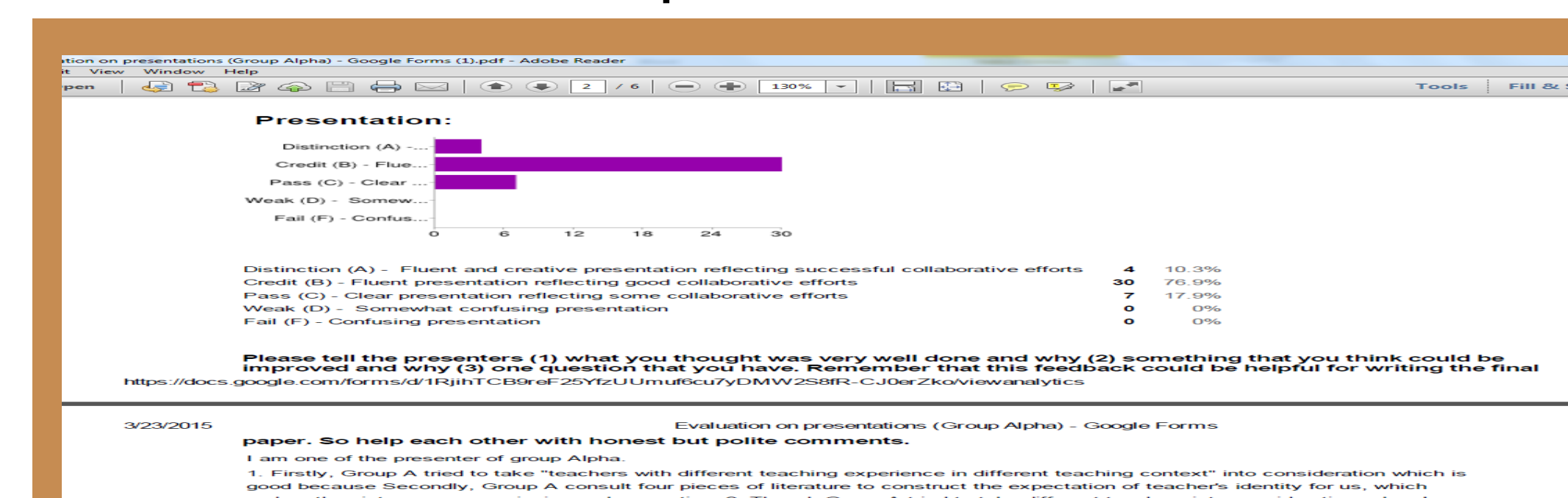
4) The above were supported through in class activities that included:
   i. brief tutorial sessions on the research process (including data collection and analysis);
   ii. lessons around topics selected for the research projects;
   iii. consultation meetings on work in progress.

D. In addition to instructor and peer-feedback using Google slides, Google forms, and discussion boards, video feedback on papers using YouTube Capture was provided and then reused as "feed forward".
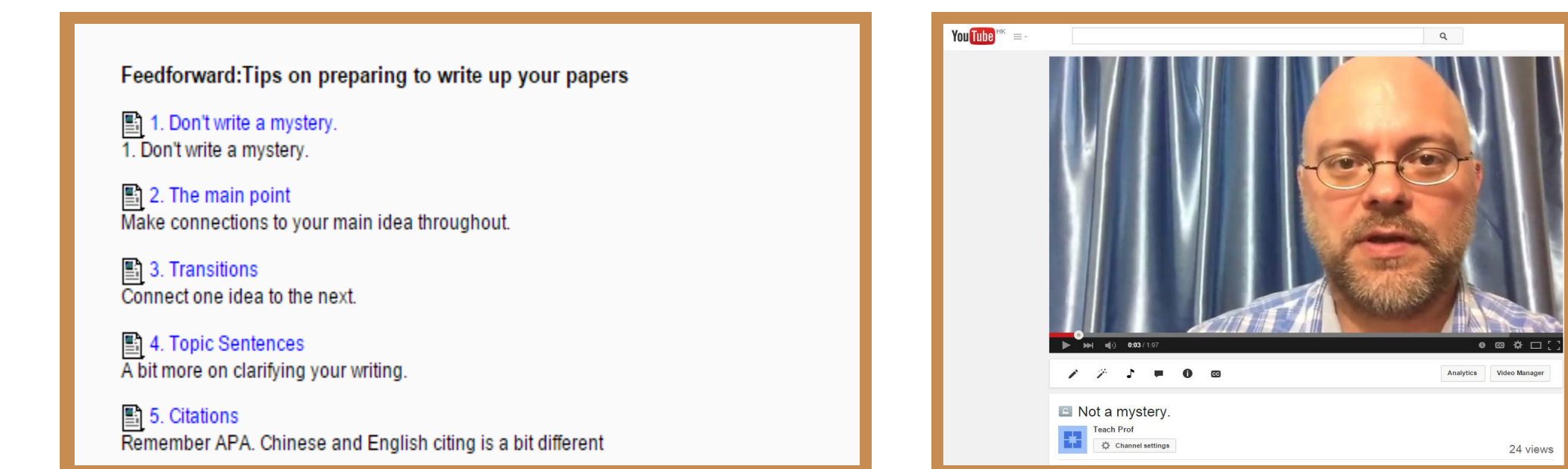
Effectiveness and Lessons Learnt

Survey results suggest that students were generally willing to take the course and were interested in the course topics. Their enthusiasm for the course was strong. All the instructional methods were acceptable to students. However, peer-critique was least preferred.

Instructor observations are that:
- Online Google slides have the potential to make student progress visible and to support feedback.
- Technologies can help with group processes or individual tasks but are less welcome for tasks that could be done face-to-face (such as discussion).
- Online activities were efficient and effective for feedback to groups, direct instruction, and individual preparation activities.
- BL extends the spreading of learning beyond one session.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1) The use of comments in Google slides as a means of *dialogue* around assessment preparation activities.

2) Using online applications during class to support face-to-face learning activities in large classes.

3) Accountability mechanisms and incentives for students.

4) Demonstrating benefits of technological options to students.

5) Proactively stimulating discussion in online forums.