

HKIED  
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
LEARNING AND TEACHING FORUM 2012-13

**ENGAGING STUDENTS INTO ONLINE  
REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE**

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### Presentation Objectives

- TDG Project - to develop five courses in the ways that would realize and use the communication tools of Blackboard as the delivery platform for engaging students into reflective dialogue on the effectiveness of course delivery.
- Inform how five research team members who provided online reflective activities to strengthen the teaching and learning of the five Social Sciences courses offered by SSC Department.

### Four Key Features (Stages)

1. Prepare and design reflective dialogue activities on teaching and learning in the Blackboard system
2. Engage students into online reflective dialogues with instructional guidance at implementation
3. Analyze students' reflective dialogues and make changes on improving course delivery if it is deemed appropriate
4. Discuss findings and prepare materials for in-house sharing

### Expected Outcomes of the Project

- Students can engage into more in-depth and interactive reflective dialogue that can improve quality learning and teaching.
- Team members can build up a learning community to support professional development for each other.
- Teachers and students can change their practices through transformation of online reflection.

### Reflective Dialogue and Relevant Issues

- Reflective dialogue (or Dialogue reflection) refers to an exchange of lived experience by drawing a specific learning theme as an object in the dialogue that enables all learners to express their own experiences and to learn about the experiences of others on the specific theme (Bengtsson, 1993, p. 208).
- Collaboration is a significant aspect of reflective dialogue.
- Technology-based learning environment is conceived and structured for transforming reflective learning culture collectively.

### Significance

- Concepts of reflection would be positioned more solidly in a pedagogic framework.
- Reflective dialogue could be re-designed to become more meaningful exchanges and interactions between teaching staff and students via online platform.
- Viewing issues from different perspectives, which is one of the important learning objectives of Social Sciences courses, students' critical and divergent thinking can be empowered through their participation in reflective dialogue in students' courses.

## Team Members' Self-evaluation and Reflection

- Courses 1 – 3
  - Demonstrated a certain level of successful engagement and enhancement of T&L in online reflective dialogue.
- Courses 4 and 5
  - Received low participation rates due to the limitation of the reflective theme chosen and tight working schedule in co-taught courses.

## Discussions

- Reflective dialogue is typically viewed as 'talk with oneself' through verbal or written form but in fact it can also be an interactive learning activity for gaining new insights about certain situations, beliefs and values (Rarleya, 2005).
- Simmons, Jones and Silver (2004) listed three things required for a successful transformation to online delivery from traditional class: course content materials, ability to teach and technological skills.
- Teachers need to redesign the curriculum to focus on active engaged learning (like what the reflective theme is), assist students to understand their strengths and weaknesses in using ICT and encourage them to become active online participants (Lee, 2006).

## Discussions

- Teachers need to maximize the use of those technologies, which are necessary to enhance communication and interaction during the programs. The components may include announcements, bulletin board postings, chat room discussions, e-mail communication, threaded discussions, virtual classrooms, and virtual lectures.
- Students' technological and interpersonal skills may challenge their online learning effectiveness. It is necessary to prepare students to use the interactive tools with proper attitudes and language usage throughout online interaction because online interactive activities are expected to be more academic in nature, which might be very different from the language used in students' daily online interactions on Facebook and/or blogs.

## Discussions

- Students must accustom themselves with the online management system, and the design and layout of the content. Each person involved with online learning and teaching must overcome the challenges associated with it. (e.g. technical, conceptual and practical aspects.)
- As Fein and Logan (2003) stated, the pedagogical design, delivery and follow-up should not be left to the course instructor alone due to the heavy workload of online teaching.

## Conclusion

- The online learning platform does help T&L to a certain extent and gives a recognition to the possibility of a transformational collective culture for reflective dialogue.
- The illustrative courses show that we need to transform online learning progressively with a very careful consideration of the authentic context, collaboration, facilitation, and technological support to sustain the active reflective dialogue.
- More in-depth study on the impacts of online reflective dialogue in quality enhancement and technological advancement on reflective dialogue can be considered in the future.

## Recommendations

Reflective theme	Enable on-going refinement of the course
Instruction	Give clear and direct instructions including required tasks, expected participation, language use, time control and mark allocation if any to support the reflection
Time	Identify the ideal and sufficient time to spend on (online) reflective dialogue, don't be overwhelming
Atmosphere	Promote a congenial, reflective, and respectful atmosphere through developing a willingness support and appreciation for each others
On-going support	Maintain instructor's role in supporting reflection and re-iterating the focus and need for reflection
Linking with assessment	Integrate individual reflections directly into assessment