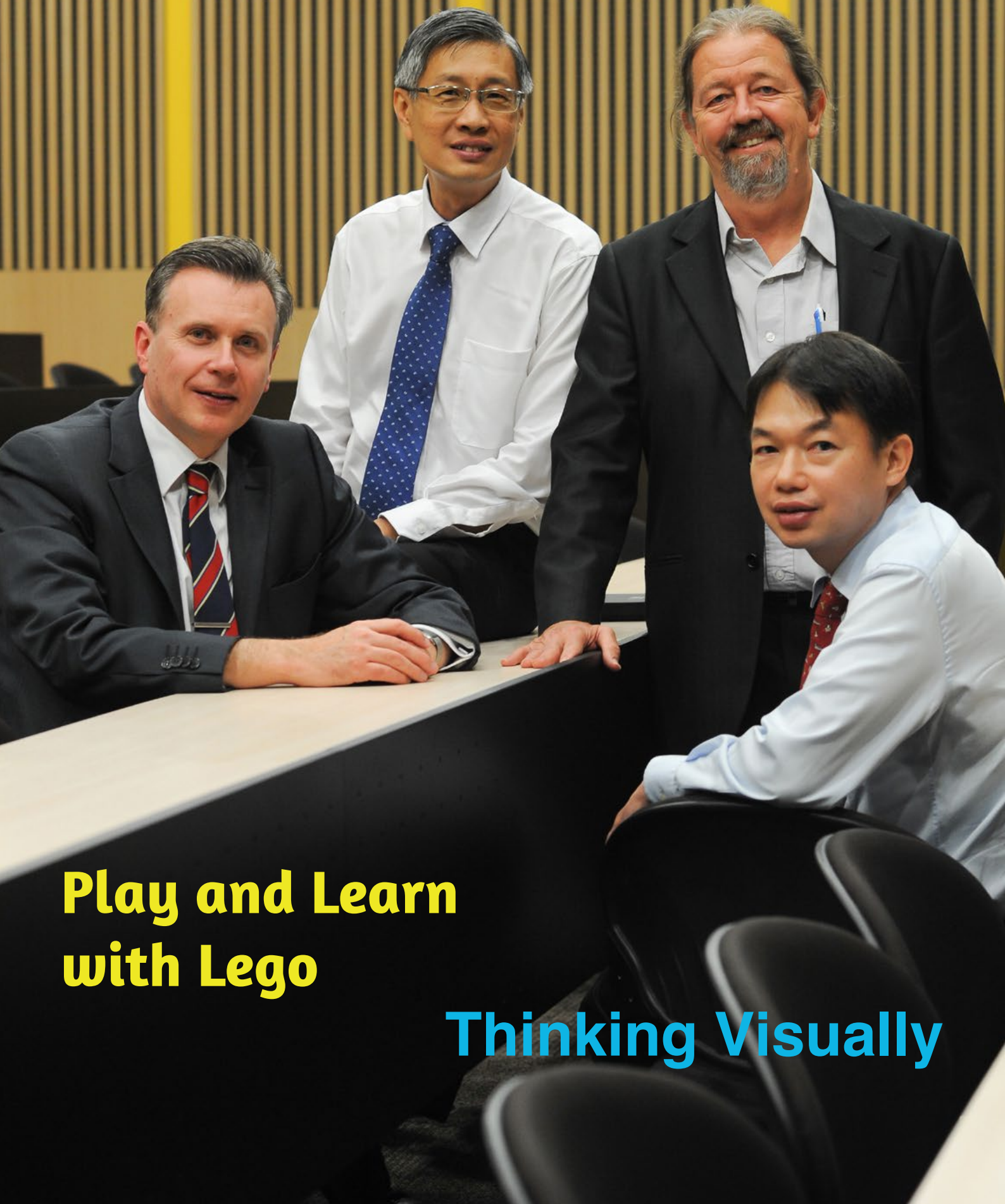


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**Play and Learn
with Lego**

Thinking Visually

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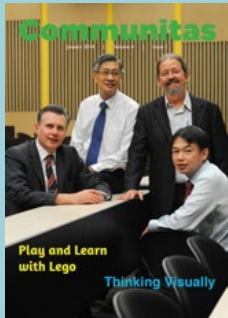
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Please send your contributions and comments to
tlc@unisim.edu.sg, with the header: "Communitas Contribution".

editor's note

Dear Colleagues,

In July 2013, UniSIM launched iStudyGuides in 51 courses and eTextbooks in 39 courses. Many more are in the pipeline for roll out in 2014. These initiatives make it more convenient for users to access the course materials while on the move, as the digital versions of the study guide and textbook may be downloaded and read on mobile devices.

The use of a different medium will necessitate some adjustments to how students learn and the way instructors teach. Learning how to use the technical functions of the reader or browser is but the first step. Students and instructors alike need to use the iStudyGuide or the eTextbook for a length of time, in order to determine how they may incorporate these into their usual study and teaching routines to benefit most from it.

Often, instructors with a keen interest in looking at novel ways of teaching and facilitating learning are more likely to be early adopters, to experiment with available tools and determine how best to incorporate them in their instructional routine. If you've taught one of the courses with an iStudyGuide or eTextbook, you might have used the "highlight," "note-taking" and "share" functions. These are useful tools for promoting teaching and learning interactions as they allow instructors to highlight key concepts, share notes with students on how concepts may be applied to a particular learning activity, or just highlight sections and pose a few question probes that can be discussed with further depth through the online discussion forum or during a face-to-face seminar session.

You'll notice that what the iStudyGuide and eTextbook offer is yet another platform for accessing and presenting the material. Ultimately, how and whether your students learn effectively within this learning environment depends on the instructor-student interactions that take place through this platform, and how you use it to reinforce your students' learning. In other words, you – the instructor – play an important role in facilitating and scaffolding your students' learning through this platform, just as you would with other tools you currently use, such as the tools found within MyUniSIM, mind mapping, video clips, case studies, and so on. The specific scaffolding techniques you employ when using these tools will vary from instructor to instructor. You just need to find the approach that works best for you, and with which you're most comfortable.

In this issue, techniques of scaffolding, motivating, encouraging, and empowering students are interwoven into the articles which offer tips for moving students beyond their zone of proximal development. Ivan Soh observes that students are motivated to do well when instructors demonstrate genuine concern for their well-being; Cedric Chew describes how he nudges, encourages, and stretches his students; Isaac Ong takes a hands-on approach to building his students' critical thinking and problem solving skills, one Lego brick at a time; Spandana Kanjula tells us how she used concept maps to help her students draw links between key concepts, while Thum Cheng Cheong demonstrates how visual tools can help students analyse and synthesise the knowledge learnt.

Dr Ludwig Tan, vice-dean of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, shares how he accidentally stumbled upon a book on calligraphy one afternoon, which triggered a fulfilling, lifelong hobby.

We hope you'll find these articles inspiring and are encouraged to look at ways in which you may incorporate the teaching approaches suggested by your fellow peers in your own seminars.

Here's wishing you all a fulfilling year ahead.

With best regards,

Dr Selina Lim
Editor

Out of the Box

Learning with Lego

by Isaac Ong



As an associate faculty member supervising Capstone students' projects, I face challenges when encouraging my capstone students to think 'out-of-the-box.' I have since come to realise that to successfully inspire, motivate, and kindle the spirit of innovation within my supervisees would require a radical shift in mindset on my part, and an openness to exploring different teaching approaches.

This means connecting with my students in a most basic and simple way, and helping them to identify their concerns and constraints.

As an educator, I am constantly looking for ways to meaningfully engage with students in the most basic and simple way, and to identify and understand their concerns and constraints. As a trained professional in instructional design, I am cognisant of the seven styles of learning and the theory of multiple intelligences. This awareness makes me a champion of purposeful engagement, especially when it comes to adult learners.

In his book 'The Global Achievement Gap', Tony Wanger noted that the seven survival skills which one needs to be equipped with at the 21st century workplace are:

1. critical thinking and problem solving;
2. collaboration across networks and leading by influence;
3. agility and adaptability;
4. initiative and entrepreneurship;
5. effective oral and written communication;
6. accessing and analysing information;
7. curiosity and imagination.

For students, just knowing these seven traits is insufficient. Rather, these skills should be demonstrated in their behaviour and performance. And this only comes about by engaging adult learners in a continuing education circuit.

Of the seven skills listed by Wagner, I deliberately focus on the students' critical thinking and problem solving skills and their ability in harnessing curiosity and imagination for their capstone projects. For this endeavour, I utilise a

'hands-on' training methodology named LEGO Serious Play (LSP). This method – hinging on constructivism (Piaget 1951), constructionism (Harel and Papert 1991), complex adaptive system theory (Holland 1995) and autopoietic corporate epistemology (von Krogh and Roos 1994; 1995) – has been adopted in teaching and learning, research, and ideation (Nolan 2009) in Higher Education.



Play more to learn more- capstone student Zi Jian being engaged in 'systems thinking' and deriving 'out-of-the-box' solutions for his computing project.

Before my students proceed to develop an IT system, I would encourage them to 'think out of the box' in the design and conceptualisation phase. Essentially, the key success factor in the everyday IT systems or products that consumers use lies in their ability to connect 'emotionally and functionally'- just like the iPhone, for example.

I use LSP to engage my students in a conversation to jumpstart their innovative design ideas. I start by posing an open-ended question or statement to the students. They would then proceed to build a model that would express their viewpoints aimed at addressing the open-ended question or statement I had posed.

There are four main steps to this teaching strategy, mainly: challenge, build, storytelling and reflection. The opening introduction is similar to learning the language of Serious Play and through a series of quick exercises the students learn the four core steps in Lego Serious Play:

1. Challenge: I would pose a question. The students proceed to build with Lego and create stories in response to the carefully posed question. The question is clear but open-ended.
2. Build: Each student builds their own 3D model in response to the question that has been posed. Student works with the special set of Lego bricks that are designed to inspire the use of metaphors and storytelling.
3. Storytelling: Students are asked to come up with a story for their 3D model. Each student shares the model's meaning and story with the rest of the team. It is critical that every student shares their story as this enables 100% participation during the session which builds a commitment to shared action.
4. Questions and Reflections: Both facilitator and students crystallise key insights arising from the process and clarify any questions they may have about the models.

The power of LSP lies in its ability and versatility in addressing the different learning styles. This method caters to learners without taking into consideration their learning styles, thus allowing practical and purposeful learning to take place. Other techniques I've used include recommending appropriate reading materials, sharing the content, and encouraging team conversations for brainstorming of ideas and critical thinking.

The colourful bricks and versatility in connectivity, coupled with the LSP 'hands-on and minds-on' learning approach, allow me to build confidence in my students. This method empowers purposeful and meaningful brainstorming with the students during the development of the projects. LSP allows constructive reflection and communication to occur between supervisor and supervisee, and student-to-student, and facilitates engagement in a basic and simple way. And, as what Sherlock Holmes supposedly said, "It's elementary!"

Isaac Ong holds a Master's degree in Instructional Design and Technology from the Nanyang Technological University. He is an Associate Faculty with the School of Science & Technology.



Session of LEGO Serious Play being lead and facilitated by Mr Isaac Ong, Associate Faculty, certified LEGO Serious Play Facilitator.



Summary of different learning styles most suited for particular teaching methods:

Styles of Learning	Learner characteristics	The different elements and techniques that I incorporated in LSP
Interpersonal: Students interact with others.	These students learn through interaction. They have many friends, feel empathy for others, and are street smart. They can be taught through group activities, seminars, and dialogues. Tools include the telephone, audio conferencing, time and attention from the instructor, video conferencing, writing, computer conferencing, E-mail.	Team meetings and sharing of ideas, concepts and concerns
Intrapersonal: Students have good understanding of their own interests, goals.	These learners tend to shy away from others. They're in tune with their inner feelings; they have wisdom, intuition and motivation, as well as a strong will, confidence and opinions. They can be taught through independent study and introspection. Tools include books, creative materials, diaries, privacy and time. They are the most independent of the learners.	Recommending of reading materials, sharing of resources Reflection
Linguistic: Students use words effectively.	These learners have highly developed auditory skills and often think in words. They like reading, playing word games, making up poetry or stories. They can be taught by encouraging them to say and see words, read books together. Tools include computers, games, multimedia, books, tape recorders, and lecture.	The Power of Storytelling
Logical: Students use mathematical reasoning, calculations.	These learners think conceptually, abstractly and are able to see and explore patterns and relationships. They like to experiment, solve puzzles, and ask cosmic questions. They can be taught through logic games, investigations, and mysteries. They need to learn and form concepts before they can deal with details.	Systems thinking Reflection
Visual-Spatial: Students tend to think in terms of physical space, as do architects and sailors.	Learners are aware of their environments. They like to draw, do jigsaw puzzles, read maps, and daydream. They can be taught through drawings, verbal and physical imagery. Tools include models, graphics, charts, photographs, drawings, 3-D modelling, video, videoconferencing, television, multimedia, texts with pictures/charts/graphs.	Connecting the bricks; colours, shapes
Bodily-kinaesthetic: Students use the body effectively, like a dancer or a surgeon.	Keen sense of body awareness. They like movement, making things, touching. They communicate well through body language and are taught through physical activity, hands-on learning, and acting out, role playing. Tools include equipment and real objects.	Connecting the bricks
Musical: Students show sensitivity to rhythm and sound.	They love music, but they are also sensitive to sounds in their environments. They may study better with music in the background. They can be taught by turning lessons into lyrics, speaking rhythmically, and tapping out time. Tools include musical instruments, music, radio, stereo, CD-ROM, multimedia.	Playing music while working the LSP; the power of storytelling

Viewpoint >> Encouraging Growth in Students

In this article, Cedric Chew encourages instructors to accord praises where they are due.

In the past few issues of *Communitas*, I revisited the core purpose of our job as instructors as well as achieving learning outcomes using an A.B.C. approach with our students.

A.B.C. in a collaborative learning environment involves:

1. **A**ctively participating in our students' learning;
2. **B**ringing value to them; and
3. **C**aring and connecting with them.

I also shared with you some ideas on how to influence students.

In this issue, I will elaborate on how you could influence students through encouragement and the importance of lifelong learning in enabling instructors to achieve those A.B.C. objectives well.

Gain more with more encouragement

Learning involves growth, challenges and change. Anyone will experience discomfort. This is why we always need to encourage our students.

Reflect on this statement:

"All human beings like regular recognition and encouragement."

If you believe this to be true universally, what are the chances that if you encourage your students more, you can inspire them to put in more effort in class and you can "connect" better with them?

In every survey I know, employees rank appreciation, recognition and encouragement at the top of their list of motivational factors at work. Would this statistic be different if students were surveyed instead?

Encouraging words are like Perrier to a thirsty man in a desert. Wise bosses and instructors know that the deepest desire of every person is to feel appreciated and valued. Yet, few of them do enough of that, and even fewer do that well.

A few well-thought out words of encouragement to your students cost nothing. Yet, magically, it can transform your students' attitudes, the mood in your class, and turn a low energy class into a high energy class. Building a more encouraging climate in class can enable you to inspire more efforts from your students.

You can encourage and compliment your students on almost anything. It can be for their effort in their individual and group assignments, their active class participation, being articulate, or even their dress sense! Lighten the mood in your class! Doing so will make

your students feel confident and smart in every sense, and your ability to "connect" with them will also be enhanced. Minimally, they know you care.

A student once shared with me that I was very strict and demanding during class time. Yet, I was also one of the more caring and kinder instructors he knew. From this, I discovered that strong critique helps a student, but kind, sincere praise and encouragement achieves even more.

Begin with a sense of gratitude and appreciation

Ponder over this... Did any of your students help you become a better instructor? Did you thank the person? At UniSIM where I teach on weekends, every student is a working adult. Typically, they attend lessons on 2 week nights and some weekends. The other 3 week nights are spent doing assignments. Now, picture yourself doing this for more than 170 weeks, with just a handful of breaks in between! They have a tough life, don't you think?

When your students are struggling, genuine words of encouragement – a kind comment, a quick compliment – will have a great impact on them.

It pays for you to have a sense of gratitude and appreciation and not to take things for granted. Personally, I feel that it is my job to acknowledge my students when they do well in something. The rest of the students can then learn from it.

I beam up answers from the better students at times. Imagine the pride of the 5 students whose answers are being showcased to the rest of the class. Pay attention to what your students did well in and thank them for it. Play it up if they are more deserving. Our students enable us to become better instructors. Our sense of gratitude determines ours and their well-being. With gratitude, kindness and encouragement fall into place easily.

Master the art of encouragement

You might want to consider practising some of the ideas below in your next class. Take baby steps and don't hold back:

Be sincere and be present

Encourage your students sincerely right after they have spoken or presented. Do this in front of everyone. Wouldn't your returns on investment (ROI) be much higher when you reinforce various types of positive behaviours in front of a large group several times during the course of a lesson?

When encouraging someone, it is important to be fully present. When you give full attention and time to the person (as opposed to mechanically rushing through the act), the recipient would feel that your encouraging words are warm and genuine. In matters of the heart, being effective is more important than being efficient.

Use various forms of encouragement

For example: "... it is great that you turned in a good assignment, we can learn much from how you balance

your UniSIM education with work, 3 kids in tow...it is great that you are graduating soon...

Or you could share: "... the class has benefited much from your questions and pointers...viewing your presentation, I think you inspired everyone to put in effort..."

When you raise the level and consistency of your encouragement, you are putting to practise the **A.B.C.**

1. Actively participate in your students' learning;
2. Bring value to them; and
3. Care and connect with them.

I tick off my students if I have to, but I always tell them that I believe everyone wants to be a professional and to add value to each others' learning. They are thus motivated. And you can see this in how they behave. Everyone turns up at 8.30am sharp for a Sunday class. If you stop and think for a moment, you might just realise that your greatest achievement could lie in your ability to bring out the best in your students.

Breed excellence, not complacency

Some instructors worry that too much encouragement will make their students complacent. Is this your worry, too? Fret not. Your students will not be complacent if you are specific with your comments and if you tell your students where they can improve.

Personally, I never had an issue with complacency. Instructors who inspire students to be more enthusiastic about learning, about the subject, will find that the majority of students are professionals. They are eager to do well and please. Let your student know how proud you are of them, when they improve even by a few marks. They are hard earned. Praise and encourage the efforts your student put in consistently and sincerely.

In the show "My Fair Lady", there is a scene where Professor Higgins shared the importance and power of encouragement and self-beliefs. He groomed a poor, uneducated flower girl plucked from the streets into one capable of carrying herself well enough to have converse with the Queen. My Fair Lady held her grace and, with her crisp British accent, had the most engaging conversation with the Queen. Encourage more and you will breed excellence, not complacency.

Succeed, gain momentum and achieve more

When you encourage your students, you are like a Chip Designer, etching and imprinting the power of self-belief onto your students' brain circuitry. They will take action to emulate best practices from other people. Two years ago, I was angry with one of my students who repeatedly presented in a very soft tone. I corrected her bluntly with specific comments in front of the whole class and I also encouraged her. I told her she had great potential to do very well once she switched her mindset, that presentations are not an insurmountable task, and that there's nothing to fear. She already knew her work well. I just needed her to understand that she should not "hide"

behind the excuse of her introvert nature and not speak up in class.

X rehearsed and did so well the next weekend that I told X, "X, you were so expressionless and close to hopeless when you presented the last 2 weekends. But look at you now! You have just presented with passion and emotions and this is one of the best presentations I have seen... Class, what do you think of X's presentation?" The whole class broke out in rapturous applause. X and a few students were visibly moved. X graduated and is doing very well in a job which requires her to present a lot. X made the mental switch when she chose to believe me and to believe in herself when I told her that she has great potential. She can be the top presenter when she wants it badly enough to learn from everybody, everyday.

Good instructors learn and grow constantly

All students have an innate desire to learn and grow. However, if instructors cannot tap into their different learning styles as an example, their needs and desires remain latent for most part. Naturally, students are also responsible for their own motivations and performance. Each of them have their own family and school issues. Many factors affect students' performance. That is why teaching, facilitating, catalysing and stoking our students' passion for learning are no mean feat. It is not easy to make our lessons interesting, especially for some subjects.

We can only do our best. Good teaching encompasses a package of skills and knowledge, of our students, the subject we teach and, lastly, teaching methodologies. We must have a strong desire to learn and adopt lifelong learning.

Someone likened lifelong learning to a "health club" for our brains. You can plan various activities for your own health club programme:

1. Ask yourself, what do I need to know to be a better instructor?
2. Read and gain more expertise in, say, facilitation skills or how to enliven your delivery in class by accessing websites on teaching resources;
3. Meet with your fellow instructors to share ideas and build relationships.

There is nothing like listening to or taking part in stimulating discussions to improve any aspect of our teaching. By staying curious and knowing the whys and whats of previous success and failures, we can develop more wisdom to teach well. Personally, I find that sharing and learning best practices from your peers not only allows us to stay abreast of change, but, more importantly, it is fun!

Learn and grow

There is a big world out there! It is fun to explore by reading widely and sharing relevant views. The world is more inter-connected today and this affects the subjects we teach. Wars, weather changes, crop yields, current events, politics, what happens in Syria, etc., will have a bearing

on economics. It is good to stay curious and constantly look for more information to feed our hungry minds and that of our students. It is helpful as we uncover relevant patterns and principles and help students connect the dots.

Perhaps, we can also adopt the habit of former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew. Ask ourselves “So what?” each time we learn a new thing. So what? How does the knowledge make me a better person? A better instructor?

Our capacity to learn and grow does not decrease as we grow older. With a zest for improvement, humility, and an open mind, all of us can learn and become better instructors. The journey of lifelong learning and mastery we take with our students is filled with challenges. But it is also meaningful and rewarding.



Cedric Chew teaches Business Strategy at UniSIM's School of Business. He received a Teaching Merit Award in 2012 and a Teaching Excellence award in 2013. In this article, he shares a few teaching tips on how to encourage your students to excellence and the importance of learning. You can consider adopting some of his suggestions. Cedric can be reached at cedricchew002@unisim.edu.sg

FAMILY DAY 2013

On November 9, 130 associates and their accompanying guests were invited to a breakfast networking session at UniSIM, followed by a visit to Gardens by the Bay. The tickets entitled them to visit Flower Dome and Cloud Forest.





Faculty Learning Symposium

Engaging Students: Making Learning Meaningful and Authentic

21 September 2013



SIM UNIVERSITY
Teaching & Learning Centre

Faculty Learning Symposium 2013



From left to right: Professor Cheong Hee Kiat, Mr Cedric Chew, Associate Professor Rob Phillips, Dr Cheah Horn Mun, Professor Kevin Ashford-Rowe and Associate Professor Wong Yue Kee.

On September 21, 130 full-time and associate faculty attended the Faculty Learning Symposium. Four speakers gave their perspective on 'Engaging Students: Making Learning Meaningful and Authentic.'



Assoc Prof Rob Phillips suggested ways of designing the learning environment that engage learners in authentic tasks reflective of real world practices. Noting the emphasis on IT skills in the 21st century, Rob stressed that rather than teaching learners how to use technology tools, learning tasks should be designed to harness these tools to produce a product or result required of an employee in the real world.

Bringing things closer to home, Dr Cheah Horn Mun also cautioned on the tendency to view ICT as a magic bullet. Educators should instead focus more keenly on teaching and learning interactions. In particular, with advancements in ICT and new media changing learning patterns, educators need to make the paradigm shift from teachers to designers of teaching.



Mr Cedric Chew, SBIZ Teaching Excellence Award recipient for 2013, described how he introduces more authenticity into his Business Strategy seminar discussions through the use of real world case studies and occurrences drawn from recent news in local and international newspapers.

Authentic learning necessitates the use of authentic assessments. Prof Kevin Ashford-Rowe identified eight critical questions for determining the authenticity of assessments. In particular, authentic assessments must include a product or performance as the end-result that is assessed as authentic by real world or industry standards; demonstration of competency in a particular skill required in a real world environment; evidence of collaboration among learners; and demonstration of metacognition.



For more on the presentations, log into <http://tlc.unisim.edu.sg/fls2013>

Interactive Learning with Advanced Organisers

by Dr Kanjula Spandana

A great deal has been written about the characteristics of effective teaching and improved student learning. But there is no single magic formula. Often, the best solution comes from the instructor's observation and reflection on what worked best under particular circumstances.

In 2012, I participated in the Teaching and Learning Centre's (TLC) Associate Champion Pilot programme in which I assessed the efficacy of the Interactive Model of Teaching and its applicability to the adult learner population at UniSIM. My project looked at the efficacy of using interactive teaching strategies – in particular, active dialogue and discussions as students collaborate on a learning task during the face-to-face classes of a first-year undergraduate blended e-course, BUS101e Management.

Implementing the Interactive model in BUS101e

BUS101e, the course in which I implemented this study, comprises of six seminar sessions – three pre-recorded e-learning presentations, and three non-compulsory face-to-face sessions. For the July 2012 semester, I had 38 students in my class. Each seminar session typically covers the content from at least two chapters of the textbook.

During the face-to-face session, the students were made to sit in groups of five or six. I structured each seminar class around a carefully designed lesson plan, with concept maps and brief introduction notes that functioned as advance organisers.



A brief introduction to the seminar topics was posted on Blackboard prior to each face-to-face class. Students were strongly encouraged to read the introductory notes along with the lesson materials before attending class. This pre-class preparation would form the body of their prior knowledge.

I began each face-to-face class by drawing a concept map (step-by-step) on the whiteboard while prompting

the students to recall the concepts from the introductory notes and their prior knowledge. Students are introduced to each concept in turn through a series of questions that provoked the students to think deeper about the salient points and issues, and the interrelationships between concepts. Cognitive strategies such as summarising, questioning, clarifying, and predicting were used during the dialogue I had with the students, so as to help them better comprehend the information in the textbook. This interactive process allowed students to build on each other's knowledge and experience, which is essential for cognitive development and deep learning (Hattie, 2009)



Subsequently, each group of students were assigned to map out the concepts in one chapter of the textbook, which typically consists of five to six topics. Each student within the group would then be assigned to read one topic, draw his or her concept map on that topic, and to present and explain their own individual concept maps to fellow team members. The whole group would then work on piecing together the individual concept maps into one main map for the chapter. Everyone was thus actively involved in reading, thinking, writing, and searching for interrelationships between the concepts. The distribution of content among the students also helped reduce the cognitive load for the student. More importantly, students began to see interrelationships of the concepts as they connected each topic within the chapter. This half-hour group exercise thus gave them the opportunity to collectively develop a greater understanding of the seminar topics.

Upon finalising their group concept map, each group were asked to present their map to the rest of the class, for their fellow classmates' comments and critique. This allowed the students to be actively engaged in the whole learning process.

Throughout the seminar session, I also made a conscious effort to ensure that each student grasped the seminar topics from both a real life perspective and an examination

viewpoint. Students need to see the relevance of the lesson concepts to their personal lives and workplace experiences, in order to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the theoretical concepts.

Key observations and recommendations

At the end of the class, I asked the students for feedback to this approach of facilitating learning. The feedback was generally positive. They say the concept maps helped them focus on key topics, while discussing the topics and collaboratively working on the maps helped develop their critical thinking skills.

However, students also requested for detailed explanations and summary of each lesson by the instructor. So even though students generally enjoyed the interactive strategies, they still preferred the content expert to endorse and reinforce the knowledge gained from peer learning.

Additionally, I also observed that individual concept maps tended to be more detailed than the overall group maps. This may be due to the lack of time for the group to interact and work together to develop a well-integrated concept map. Also, the concept mapping activity took much longer to complete than envisaged, and some students felt the exercise detracted from the overall learning potential of the activity.

Some final words

The effectiveness of the Interactive Model is dependent on prior student preparation. Because students often come unprepared for class, this approach may not lend itself easily as the sole method of instruction in a face-to-face session. Moreover, this teaching method requires the instructor to adopt a nurturing and supportive role, and to be fairly skilled in questioning, guiding, and developing the student's understanding of the subject matter. The instructor must thus be confident and flexible enough to experiment with the use of a variety of approaches to trigger the student's cognition to develop their understanding of the topics.

On a more personal note, this project has been an enlightening and rewarding endeavour, providing me

with insights on students' learning and making me more reflective about how I might improve my own teaching practice. I would like to thank Prof. Gopinathan and Dr Selina Lim for their guidance while working on this project.



Dr Spandana Kanjula is an Associate Faculty with the School of Business. She was one of two associates selected to pilot the Associate Faculty Champion initiative in 2012.

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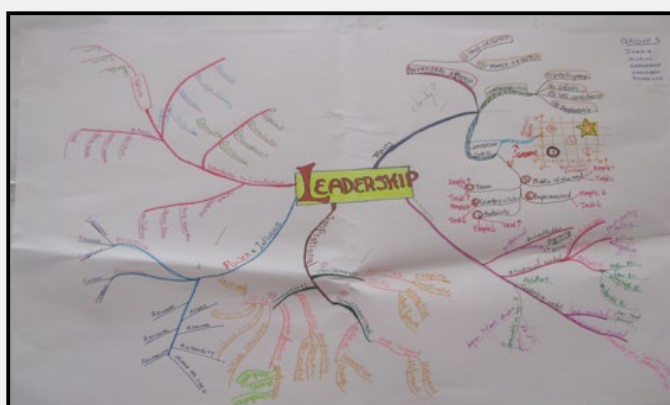
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Concept Maps by Students



Which is it - X, Y, or Z?

by Ivan Soh

In a commonly used activity in learning, participants are often asked to recall the shape and colour of cards after they are shown the cards in quick succession. What these participants do not know was that the colour of the shapes in the cards had been switched. As a result, they are able to recall only the cards with the shapes that they were familiar with, rather than what they had seen!



This raises the question: do we, because of our familiarity with our work or academic experiences, make certain assumptions about how our learners' learn? Could it be a mental model that stem from our prior work or managerial experiences?



An interesting landmark article on management, written by Douglas McGregor (1960), illustrates the distinction between fundamental management styles that arises from the assumption one makes about human nature. In particular, it discusses two views: those employees are either “coerced” to work through the use of rewards and punishment, or that they are “self-motivated”

to put in the work due to their need to feel a sense of achievement and fulfilment.

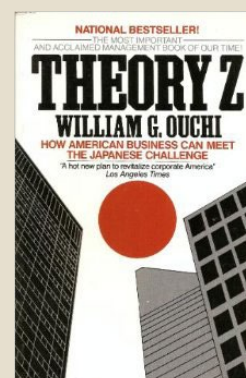
How does knowing all of this help us understand our students at UniSIM? Many years ago, in an article I

wrote for SIM-OUC, entitled “Half Empty...or Half Full”, I stressed the importance of identifying and reflecting on the assumptions we may hold about our learners’ predisposition to learn.

Facilitators who assume that learners adopt a “half empty” perspective towards learning appear to be like the managers in McGregor’s Theory X. These facilitators often assume the sole responsibility of motivating and supervising their learners’ learning progress – which includes having their students adhere to a strict regimen of assessments, deadlines, methodologies, and so on. This may not be necessarily bad if their learners reciprocate in a compliant and with unquestioning minds.

On the flipside, there is McGregor’s Theory Y – or what I termed as the “half full” perspective. Here, the facilitator assumes that learners with prior work experiences are self-motivated, goal-oriented and, most importantly, are studying for their degree in order to improve themselves. Instead of being the “sole owner” of knowledge transfer, Theory Y facilitators encourage participatory learning, problem solving, and group projects. The learner then takes ownership of his or her learning. However, such an approach requires the facilitator to find out what motivates his or her learner to want to read the course materials, turn up for seminars, submit assignments and sit for exams.

"If Theory Y seems to fit best with learners at the university, why do disparities exist between the facilitators and learners in their interactions"? On one hand, Theory Y seems to assume that learners are self-motivated and this suggests that the facilitator is likely to have less problems trying to engage the learner in learning activities. However, on the flip side, it is not uncommon to encounter learners expecting their facilitators to supervise their learning through feedback, mini-lectures and group activities."



Could there be another theory beyond Theory X and Y? Is there a Theory Z on work?

Perhaps, some of you may be aware of Theory Z, popularised by Dr William Ouchi, which describes the Japanese management style during the industrial boom years of the

eighties. Ouchi hypothesised that a management team that takes an active role in corporate decision making while concurrently looking after the well-being of their employees is more likely to retain their employees' commitment, job satisfaction and achieve higher productivity at work.

So, is there a Theory Z in the facilitation of learning? If so, what would a "Theory Z" facilitator look like?

If we were to adapt Theory Z to learning, then a Theory Z facilitator would be interested in the academic progress as well as well-being of their learner. The Theory Z facilitator is thus likely to:

1. Accentuate the well-being of the learners by arousing their curiosity to learn with learning activities that are possibly experiential in nature. A useful reference guide to developing such learning activities is Kolb's four learning styles, and McLeod's commentary (2010) on Kolb & Fry's Learning Model
2. Address learners' episodic queries with FAQs and web links. Facilitators are strongly encouraged to develop blogs with linkages on specific subject matters. (Please see the example provided below that was drawn from the Strategy module)
3. Cultivate learners' confidence in learning through the use of specific and detailed feedback in a positive and open language.

So, is there a "Theory Z" in the facilitation of learning? Does it matter? That's for you to decide.



Ivan has taught marketing, management and strategy at the university for the past 16 years. Prior to this, he held senior managerial appointments with a Japanese "sogosha", a country-themed restaurant chain, and an Australian learning media company. He is currently on a contract assignment with a European manufacturing company and travels occasionally to exotic destinations for consulting assignments. Ivan holds an MBA from the University of Warwick.

References

- Example of a blog containing subject links by the author to develop learners' perspective on Strategy (BUS 488 Module): <http://understandingstrategy.blogspot.sg>
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HIGHLIGHTS

Advanced Workshop on Audio and On-Camera Presentations

Ms Maura Fogarty of Forgarty Communications Pte Ltd will be conducting an advanced workshop in March on scripting for audio and on-camera presentations. Course developers who are producing chunked lecture recordings are encouraged to attend the workshop. Videos of previous workshops by Maura on effective audio and on-camera presentations are available through MyUniSIM as the online module, AD151 Presentations that Wow!

Student Events

TLC is organising a full-day event for students on 18 January 2014. The full-day event, conducted by TLC faculty, will focus on essential skills for academic success at UniSIM.

During the morning session (9 am to 12 pm), students will learn about time management and good study habits and skills. The afternoon session (1 pm to 4 pm) will focus on the basics of academic writing, including organisation of ideas, structure of essay, and soundness of argument.

TLC held a similar student event in July 2013 that saw 208 attending "Successful Learning at UniSIM," and 301 turning up for "Introduction to Academic Writing."

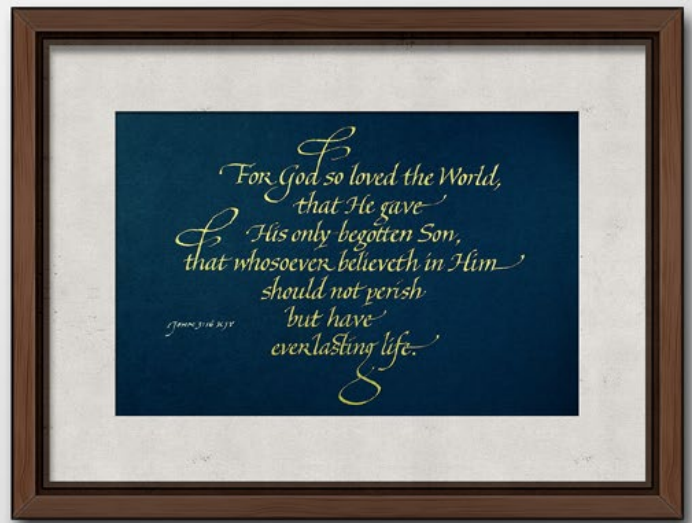
Do inform your students of this event, as they will likely benefit from the tips shared during the two sessions.

Faculty Appreciation Dinner

2014 Faculty Appreciation Dinner will be held at Mandarin Orchard on March 22. Keep a look-out for the registration details in January.

Learning Journey: Western Calligraphy in Singapore

By Dr Ludwig Tan



My journey into the world of Western calligraphy and handwriting began late one afternoon in early December 1986.

It was the school holidays, and I decided I finally had to do something about my atrocious handwriting. This was, of course, the pre-Internet era, so the best place to start was a library. Fortunately we had a rather well-stocked one at home: my father, a senior lecturer in Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS), was an avid reader and book collector, so I had at my disposal thousands of books on almost every conceivable subject. Looking through the shelves that afternoon I found *A Guide to Better Handwriting* by the eminent Scottish calligrapher Tom Gourdie, and the following day I found another of his books, *Italic Handwriting*.

By an amazing coincidence, Tom was in Singapore at that very moment, and his visit was reported in an article in the *Straits Times*. That weekend, he held an exhibition and demonstration, hosted by the NUS's Extra-Mural Studies Department, and my father took me to meet him. I was struck not only by the beauty of Tom's handwriting and calligraphy, but also by the sheer logic in the way letterforms were written and joined. I vividly remember that afternoon, and even the date: Sunday 7 December 1986.

In the months that followed, I bought more books and calligraphy pen sets, began corresponding with Tom, and made swift progress. Looking back, I realize how fortunate I had been to come across the right books because, as a complete beginner, one often cannot tell whether an exemplar is worth learning from. Very quickly I picked up the major calligraphic styles, namely Italic, Copperplate, Foundational and Gothic, and within a couple of months my handwriting had undergone a transformation

and Italic became my everyday hand. I even became competent enough to take on a couple of calligraphy commissions, such as hand-lettering certificates on the spot during a competition, for which I was paid \$100 an hour — a lot of money even today.

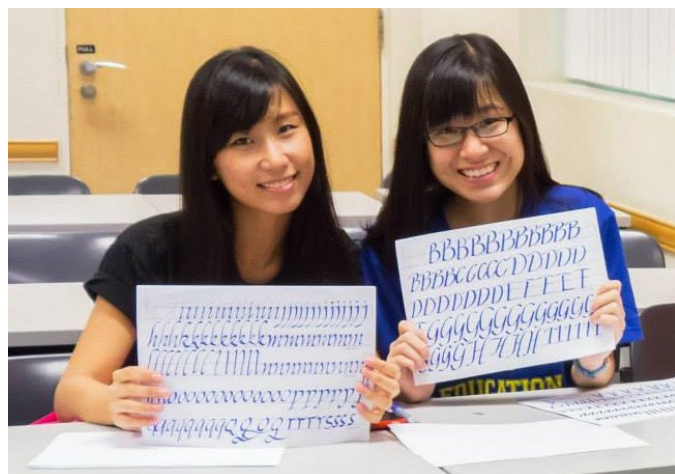


An assortment of my writing instruments.

Around 1989 I joined the Singapore-based Calligraphy Special Interest Group (CSIG) and the UK-based Society for Italic Handwriting (SIH). From 1995 to 2003, I was a student in the UK, and this was when my hobby really took off. I visited Tom Gourdie and his wife regularly in Scotland, and got to know many other calligraphers. For me, it was a dream come true to meet all these big names in the calligraphy world and a revelation to learn that they were extremely nice, helpful, normal human beings. I became an Executive Committee member of the SIH in 2000, and did a couple of calligraphy demonstrations in places like London and Norwich. It was a novelty to be able

to attend calligraphy meetings (which I'd only been able to read about previously) and to buy supplies and vintage pens at well-known art stores and antiques markets such as Cornelissen's and Portobello Road Market.

When I left the UK in 2003, I feared that I was returning to a calligraphy desert, but my fears were unfounded. Interest in new and vintage fountain pens was taking off in Singapore, and with it, handwriting. I began my new job teaching at the National Institute of Education (NIE), where I taught linguistics to trainee teachers, and in 2008 I was approached by a student representative to offer a calligraphy workshop as part of NIE's annual Learning Festival. Until then I had never taught calligraphy, but my workshop attracted a full class of 25 participants; and by the end of the three-hour session, some were writing quite remarkably well. I'm pleased to say that my 'Western Calligraphy 101' workshop has since become a regular feature of the Learning Festival, and is now into its sixth year.



Western calligraphy workshop at NIE Learning Festival, 11 September 2013.

Quite unexpectedly, 2013 has turned out to be a bumper year for workshops. In January, through the National Library Board's (NLB) arts outreach programme, I taught my first-ever calligraphy class to a public audience. When the class was over, I realized I had fulfilled my teenage dream of teaching calligraphy to adults: as a teenager picking up calligraphy back in the late 1980s, I often thought as I passed by the community centre on a bus that it would be cool to teach a class of adults.

Demand for the NLB workshops was surprisingly strong, so I was asked to offer more of them and by November 2013, I had taught seven sessions. All sessions were extremely well attended and attracted participants from all age groups and walks of life, from primary school students to teachers, and from medical doctors to retirees. I was also very pleased to teach a workshop to UniSIM students, jointly organized by Student Support and the School of Arts and Social Sciences, and another to Crafty Singapore, a private crafts group.

These workshops have been tiring but immensely rewarding to do. It is gratifying for me to see people learn to write calligraphically, and to spread knowledge about Western calligraphy. Some participants had attended out of curiosity because the use of the word 'calligraphy' in the

Western context was novel to them; indeed, in Singapore the word is almost synonymous with Chinese calligraphy. And while Western calligraphy was something that attracted people of a certain age back in the late 1980s, I'm heartened to note that many youngsters are now taking an interest in good handwriting and even fountain pens and traditional dip nibs. Indeed, they're very much the driving force behind two Facebook groups: Calligraphers SG and Singapore Fountain Pen Lovers. This curiosity about traditional writing practices and tradition in general may have something to do with Harry Potter and the like or boredom with iPads and other devices – whatever the case may be, this can only be a good thing.



With participants after my Western calligraphy workshop, Woodlands Regional Library, 26 January 2013.



Dr Ludwig Tan is vice-dean with the School of Arts and Social Sciences. He holds a PhD in Linguistics from Cambridge and his academic interests include Singapore English, English grammar and usage, and phonetics and phonology. Besides calligraphy, his main hobby is photography; he enjoys shooting wildlife, street cats, cars, and events. A selection of his cat photographs appeared in a 2013 calendar called Street Cats of Singapore, which was sold in aid of a special school.

OUT OF THE BOX Visuals to Organise Thinking

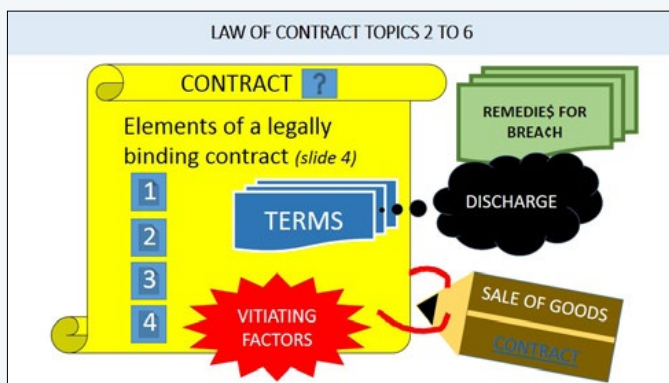
By Thum Cheng Cheong

In this Digital Age, we often find ourselves in constant competition for our learners' attention during our seminar sessions. There are just too many distractions – from the use of smartphones to tablets and beyond. So how can we engage our learners?

I put myself in the learner's shoes and constantly seek feedback as I progress in my journey of discovery. One of the most important discoveries I made is the need to distill and simplify the avalanche of information to its fundamental core concepts.

For example, in the Business Law course that I teach, the law of contract topic is usually covered in five lectures. Because lecture slides are written in linear form and the learner will attempt to remember the legal concepts from slide #1 to the very last slide, and from Lecture #1 to Lecture #5. By the end of the 5th lecture, however, most of the learners will be confused by the complexity of the law.

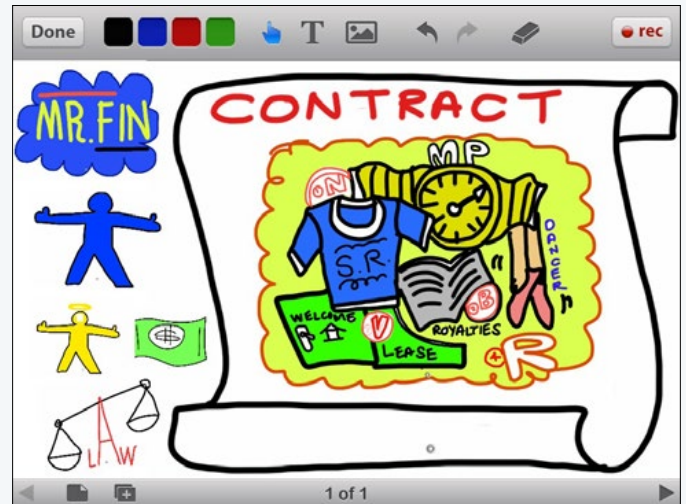
To simplify the concepts for my students, I decided to change my approach in using PowerPoint slides. In particular, I use "shapes" to design the overview to the topic in PowerPoint (see illustration below).



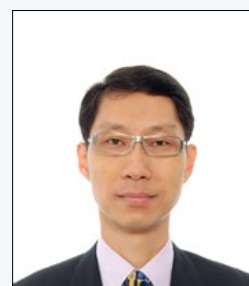
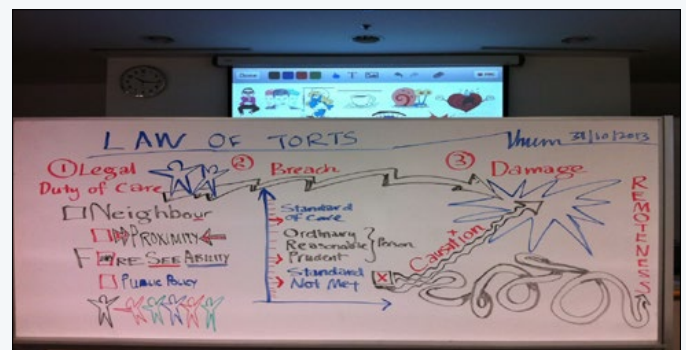
You will notice that I limit the use of words per slide to prompt the learners to recall and think about the legal concepts taught and to apply them to the case scenarios. The visuals also help the learners to organise their thinking for analysis and synthesis.

As the instructor explains the key concepts and the learners attempt to make sense of the application, they will start to imagine the scenario. Instead of just delivering the "story" verbally, wouldn't it be wonderful to animate it in the lecture itself and let the learners witness "real-time story-telling" as it unfolds? Doing so puts the instructor in control of the situation and allows him or her to respond to questions raised by the students.

One such app which I use successfully with an iPad is "Educreations." This app helps learners move from the helicopter view to a more detailed analysis of the legal concepts and the how they might apply the concepts in the real world. There are many other apps in the market which the educator can use to transfer knowledge.



My favourite tool is still the back-to-basics approach with the marker-and-whiteboard. During my classes, I am encouraged by the increasing number of students taking photos of the visuals, in addition to drawing them onto the lecture notes! That signals a good start to their learning journey.



Thum is a ThinkBuzan licensed instructor and a member of the International Forum of Visual Practitioner (IFVP). As an Associate Faculty with the School of Business, he's designed the study skills module comprising of speed reading, memory techniques and mind mapping for BUS100: Business Skills & Management using visualisation techniques.

Thum will be facilitating a workshop on January 4, where he will show participants simple tools to help their students learn, recall, and think better.

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Quick Guide to SIM University

The Quick Guide to SIM University for Associates is a useful reference booklet for new and existing associates. It offers an overview of UniSIM's organisational structure, the various support measures available to associates and students, payment schedule, as well as important contact details and frequently used acronyms. Scan the QR code to download the Quick Guide to your mobile devices.



<http://tlc.unisim.edu.sg/Quick-Guide-to-UniSIM>



Academic Calendar

Events	Dates
Instructional Period (Classes)	20 January to 28 April
Self Revision	29 April to 12 May
Examinations	13 to 26 May
Semester Break	27 May to 21 July
Release of Course Results	20 June

* UniSIM reserves the rights to amend and/or revise the above schedule without any prior notification.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

MARCH 22

Faculty Appreciation Dinner

SEPTEMBER 27

Faculty Learning Symposium

