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BEYOND LECTURES: INSIGHTS FROM BUSINESS DISCIPLINES (REFLECTIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS, AND THE HUMAN SIDE OF TEACHING)

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
UiTM CAWANGAN JOHOR

Beyond Lectures: Insights from Business Discipline-

(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human Side of Teaching)

Chief Editor
Dr. Azila Jaini

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Patron:
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REFLECTION ON TRANSFORMING QUANTITATIVE LEARNING THROUGH SCENARIO-BASED GROUP CASE STUDIES

Sharazad Haris, Wan Mohd Farid Wan Zakaria, Norashikin Ismail

Introduction

In many classrooms, quantitative subjects are often approached as technical territory: structured, exact, and centred on arriving at the correct answer. Yet behind this technical surface is a very human experience of learning. For many students, the difficulty is not only the formula itself, but the fear of getting it wrong, the hesitation to speak, and the tendency to struggle alone. Over time, these patterns invite reflection on whether the issue lies only in the subject matter or also in how learning is organised around it. This writing grew from that reflection. It considers how one assessment was redesigned to make room for discussion, shared reasoning, and mutual support among students. In doing so, it offers a reflection on what happened when a subject often seen as rigid and intimidating was approached as a collaborative learning experience.

The Challenge of Teaching Quantitative Subjects

This observation is based on years of teaching quantitative courses, particularly in fields like finance and investment. This reflection focuses on the Analysis and Valuation of Fixed-income Securities, one of the courses offered to final-year students in the Diploma in Investment Analysis. This course is heavily focused on formulas, calculations and structured problem-solving, which can be intimidating to some. There is a common and stressful belief that this subject is rigid, where answers are either correct or wrong. This creates a mental block in which students see the work as a series of hurdles to jump over rather than a body of knowledge to explore.

Repišti (2016) noted that in tertiary education, teaching quantitative subjects, such as statistics, faces challenges including students' performance and motivation, anxiety caused by complexity, low self-efficacy, and a lack of prior knowledge and skills from high school. This study suggested several alternative pedagogical approaches to shift students' focus from memorisation to active contextual understanding.

Previously, greater weightage was given to Individual problem-solving assessments. This type of assessment can measure basic knowledge and technical ability, but does not necessarily foster deep conceptual understanding. Some students memorised procedures without fully understanding why a particular method was used, while some struggled silently.

Due to this, it is imperative to shift the focus (a) from solely relying on didactic learning to incorporating peer learning, (b) from mimicking the formula and following routine steps to fully grasping the underlying logic, and (c) from viewing the subject as an isolated uphill battle to embracing it as a shared intellectual challenge.

Scenario-Based Collaborative Group Case Studies

For this course, a collaborative group case study has recently been introduced and implemented. This case study is built around scenario-based problems for selected chapters in the syllabus, specifically those that are quite heavy on formulas and computation.

Unlike the standard numerical exercises typical of final examinations, the case study questions focus on contextual application and higher-order analysis. The questions were structured to be solved in stages, starting from (a) understanding the scenario given in that particular question, (b) identifying the problems, (c) identifying the underlying and relevant concepts, (d) determining and applying the appropriate method for that particular question, (e) crunching

the numbers or performing the calculations and finally (f) deciding and providing justification for the decision made.

Solving the questions requires more than just technical ability. The students must brainstorm together to interpret the given scenario, recall what they have learnt, and relate theory to practice, truly understand the problem and the solution, so that they will be able to defend their reasoning and conclude, decide, and justify their conclusions.

The Power of Peer Learning

The implementation of scenario-based collaborative case studies encourages students to fully understand the body of knowledge and make defensible decisions rather than just memorising and crunching numbers. Another advantage of incorporating this assessment into this course is the emergence of peer teaching and learning, a shift away from teacher-led instruction.

The case study questions set usually comprises six to eight questions, each built with a different scenario. In practice, three questions are discussed and resolved within the allocated class hour, allowing the instructor to monitor the discussion. In contrast, the remaining questions are discussed and completed outside the classroom.

Rather than splitting the work into isolated individual tasks, students are encouraged to engage with each problem collectively and arrive at a solution through group discussion. This approach appears to support the development of peer teaching and peer learning. Classroom observations show that (a) stronger students often take the initiative to explain concepts to their group members, and (b) the group members actively debate on the most suitable approach and the formulas that should be applied to solve the problems.

This active and proactive interaction indicates a constructive learning process. Peer explanation, delivered in language that fellow students may relate to, may at times be more effective than a formal lecture. It has also been observed that they can challenge and correct each other's reasoning during discussions. As a result, individual confusion has now been successfully replaced by (a) learning from each other and (b) collective problem-solving.

A study by Thongkorn and Cojorn (2025) has also highlighted the benefits of collaborative problem solving (CPS), peer learning, and group activities, such as solving complex problems, integrating soft skills, constructing knowledge, and enhancing students' communication and engagement (to name a few). True to that, we have also observed that soft skills like communication, analytical skills and heightened confidence in articulating ideas through discussion are naturally fostered in the process.

In addition to the benefits listed above, this collaborative case-study approach also builds empathy and collective responsibility among the group members. On top of that, students learnt to be better listeners and to respect differing ideas. This is in line with the study done by Walusa and Qhosola-Mahlomaholo (2026). It is noted that through such exercises and practice, students are better able to share knowledge with one another, improve active listening skills, and build stronger empathy. Students learnt to appreciate diverse viewpoints and cultivate a culture of respect and cooperation. In short, with group dynamics, the classroom atmosphere becomes more engaged, interactive, and supportive.

Collaborative Group Case Study and Academic Performance

The effectiveness of collaborative case studies as an assessment tool is evident in the noticeable improvements in students' academic performance on the final examination. These case study exercises functioned as active revision sessions that reinforced knowledge and strengthened students' confidence. The discussion, the debated method, and the justified discussion conducted during the exercise have contributed to a strong level of conceptual clarity. Their ease in communicating with each other and the peer-learning habits developed

during these activities appeared to carry over, continuing through the subsequent assessments and the final exam. As a result, improved academic performance as reflected in their final exam scores.

Conclusion

This reflection suggests that meaningful improvement in teaching does not always require major curriculum change, but can begin with rethinking how students engage with the subject. This transformation in class practice has created an avenue for students to discuss, debate, and work through the problems collectively. It offers stronger engagement in quantitative subjects and a better, more supportive, and interactive classroom environment. This experience shows that deeper learning is more likely to happen when students are allowed to share ideas, test their understanding and learn from one another.

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