

# Not just a statistic: Providing students with reflective opportunities through blogging

Faculty of Military Science | Department of Military Management

**Module:** Military Management 214

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Learning activity:  
Reflection

Learning technology:  
Mahara

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## Context

### Background

The blog project was a collaborative study between the Department of Military Management and the Centre for Educational Technology. Sixty-seven students participated in the study. The students were both residential and non-residential students.

### Subject area

This is a course in logistics management, a term that denotes a total systems approach to the management of all of those activities involved in physically moving raw materials and doing inventories and finished goods inventories from the point of origin to the point of consumption. Effective logistics management can improve an organisation's marketing effort by establishing consistent and dependable customer service levels.

### Established practice

The lecturer used to upload all relevant course materials on SUNLearn. She created a Turnitin assignment and uploaded a rubric that was used to guide students on how the task was going to be graded. The students uploaded the assignment on SUNLearn. The lecturer marked the individual assignments by making comments (through Track Changes) and allocating marks. At the end, she consolidated all her comments and compiled generic feedback that she uploaded as a file on SUNLearn.

### The challenge

The lecturer took time to make comments on the students' assignments. Although the students were provided with both individual and generic feedback, the lecturer observed that they appeared to have little to do with the feedback because they often did not address aspects of previous feedback in subsequent assignments. This meant that they focused more on their grades and less on engagement with the feedback.

### Advantages associated with the integration of technology

Integrating blogs as a reflective tool enabled the lecturer to move towards student-centred teaching and learning. It also enabled collaboration and engagement among the students and improved communication.

## Student overview

Sixty-seven residential students participated in the study. These students were studying for a BMil degree.

## Learning and assessment activities

### Educational approach

The focus was on authentic learning, with the incorporation of aspects of the authentic learning model (Ozcerir, Herrington & Osam, 2016) and the affordances of blogging to support teaching and learning (Bower, 2008).

**AIR TRANSPORT**  
by [Antony Barnard](#) - Sunday, 5 April 2015, 10:00 PM

Anyone on this site

**Operational Overview**

Air transport is a very popular way of transporting goods although it is a very small portion of transport compared to road transport mainly because it is so expensive. Air transport can obtain the largest distances in the shortest time because of the excessive speeds they travel at. Air freight usually carries very valuable products. The reliability of air transport is very high although it is extremely limited to big cities only as big aircraft like a [boeing 747](#) [can not](#) land on short runways.

Figure 1: Screenshot of student blog entry



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## Learning activities

The students engaged in problem-based learning. They were required to identify a problem in their working environment, complete a case study and then create a blog entry to reflect on the feedback by the lecturer and their peers.

## Assessment activities and feedback practices

The task was done in two stages. In the first stage, the lecturer used the rubric to provide the students with feedback on their first submission of the task but not to grade the task. The students reflected on the feedback by creating blog entries on SUNLearn. They then shared with their group members how they improved their task based on the feedback. The group members made comments on their peers' blogs by offering ideas and critiques, pointing out any omissions or asking questions. The students then updated their task based on the feedback from both the lecturer and their peers. In the second stage, the task was submitted to the lecturer for grading. Grades were allocated as follows: 5% for the comments on peers' blogs, 10% for the reflections on the blog and 85% for the final submission.

## Student self-regulation

The students could reflect continuously on the feedback from both the lecturer and their peers. They could also resubmit their assignments after receiving feedback.

## Learning environment

### Learning setting

The residential students attend face-to-face classes, while the non-residential students work in the military units and attend one week-long contact session at the beginning of a semester. The lecturer is redesigning the module in a blended learning mode of practice on SUNLearn to enhance student-student, student-lecturer and student-content interaction.

### Collaborative setting

All the students created their own blogs. They had to share their blogs with their group members and the group members had to comment on each other's blogs. The students also had to showcase their blogs to the rest of the class for final inputs before final submission.

## Content resources

The students were provided with the PowerPoint slides and rubrics beforehand.

## Technology resources

SUNLearn was the main technology resource, with the Forum serving as the blogging platform.

### Comments (4)

- George Enslin** - Tue, 14 Apr 2015, 9:11 PM

Nice work A Team, I enjoyed reading your post - very interesting topic.

If I may, here are a few suggestions that I think you can maybe consider to make your blog a bit more appealing.

  - In your Operational Overview, I would like to see a bit more of an introduction to the pipeline industry. Tell your readers what it's all about and how it works. I feel your overview is merely part of the strengths of pipelines.
  - Also you might want to consider putting the Strengths and Limitations in a list format for neatness and readability.
  - Maybe add a video or some picture?
- Charlene Woodcroft Brown** - Tue, 14 Apr 2015, 9:56 PM

Great blog A Team - I feel like this was a good summary of pipeline transportation. I enjoyed the focus on South African infrastructure.

I agree that a picture or two, or maybe some other form of colour would have made the blog more vibrant.
- Coenraad Kotz** - Wed, 15 Apr 2015, 8:55 AM

A Team I could understand the pipeline system better after reading the blog.

A picture here and there will be nice to see and there is places like limitations that could rather been listed to shorten the blog and give the reader easier read material.

Figure 2: Students commenting on each other's blog posts



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## Support challenges

The main challenge was access to the internet (data bundles and WiFi), which limited the freedom of the students to work on the blogs. The students could therefore work only on the blogs at the computer lab.

## Student experience

### Student feedback on the learning experience

Feedback was collected using clickers, which provided student anonymity and therefore for freely given constructive feedback. The students felt that the learning process allowed them the opportunity to discuss the feedback with the lecturer, which helped them to make corrections. It also allowed them to engage with the feedback and so ensure a good final product. Feedback from both the lecturer and the peers was an eye-opener, as ideas were mentioned that the groups had not thought of, which helped the students to improve their blogs.

## Assessment impact

There was a great improvement in the quality of the work that the students submitted and the students took ownership of their own learning.

## General

### Opportunities

Students' peer review skills can be further developed. They tend to act defensively when receiving feedback from other groups.

## Challenges

Some of the students did not participate in their groups. They also felt uncomfortable that their comments were made available to all the students instead of only to their group members. Developing student skills in giving and receiving feedback could address this problem as well.

## Advice

Time is needed to develop the whole process and it needs to be tested and adopted according to the learner profile. Students must feel part of the process. The resources that the students have access to should also be taken into consideration.

## Reference list

Bower, M. 2008. [Affordance analysis – matching learning tasks with learning technologies](#). *Educational Media International*, 45(1):3–15.

Ozcerir, I., Herrington, J. & Osam, U.V. 2016. [Design principles for authentic learning of English as a foreign language](#). *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 47(3):484–493.

