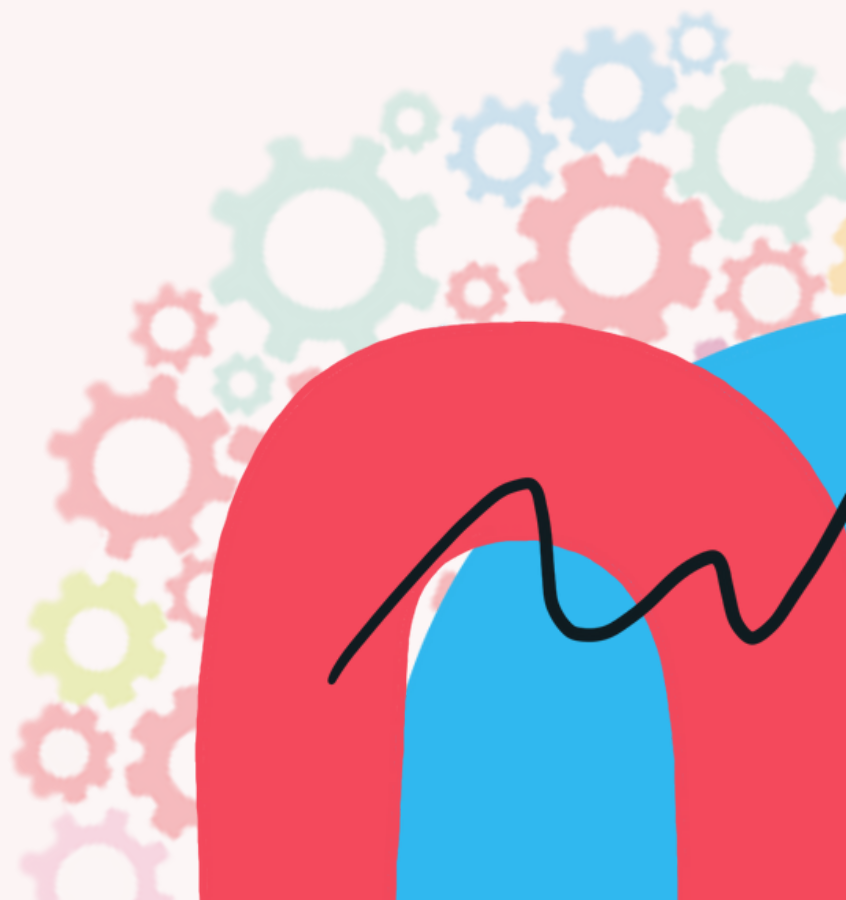# Blending online and offline environments for using creativity methods

TICON - Teaching creativity online

Blending online and offline environments in creativity teaching becomes critical in two occasions:

1. If you are doing hybrid teaching, i.e., if you teach in a setting where some participants are physically in the classroom while others join online.
2. If you teach completely online but the methods that you want to use require that the participants have physical material available at the place where they are.

Careful planning of activities for blending online and offline environments was found to be critically important for establishing trust and motivation among students to participate in creativity-related activities in online and hybrid classes. Barak and Usher (2019: 9) recommend that engineering students should be encouraged to work together outside the F2F or online class structure and do collaborative work between classes. This could contribute to motivation and mutual trust in both online and hybrid sessions, and hence, increase overall success of creativity exercises/classes (ibid).

When this is important: Creativity tasks that require flow writing/drawing/crafting

It is mostly inspiration and association related tasks in the divergent phase of a creativity process that require that participants use physical material on their desk instead of electronic means. The reason for this is that when required to detach from reality and develop something new, creativity exercises will need to be conducted in a flow mode that permits logical thinking.

Research found that this status is almost impossible to reach when using electronic means for writing, drawing and designing objects, as screens distract participants and remind them of the possibility to for example correct errors using the auto correction program, and thereby break the flow. Instead, the kinaesthetic experience of longhand writing, drawing or crafting under time pressure is conducive for accessing creativity in the divergent phase and enables the intuitive emergence of stories, pictures or prototypes (Manwaring, 2020).

The turning point represents another challenge, as it is meant to distract the participants from what has been done during the divergent phase. This becomes more difficult when participants keep using the same tool (computer screen), therefore they should ideally be incited to be more active. Yet, as they are alone in their rooms, the tasks give to them need to be doable and attractive/funny/competitive (e.g., "Go out and take a picture of the closest hydrant and yourself and upload it – the first group whose members have completed this task wins.")

Start preparation early enough

Start preparing well in advance. When you need to start preparation, depends on how easy you can reach your participants and how difficult it is for them to gain access to the material.

- In a situation when you can fast communicate with participants who will not be in class and you just ask them to have normally in a household available material (e.g., a coloured pen and a piece of paper) ready for your session, inform them a week before that you expect them to have this material ready. Plan 5 minutes of slack time in, so that those who did not prepare well can still get the required material ready on the spot.
- In a situation when you want the participants to have specific material ready that you cannot expect them to have at home (e.g., specific cardboard templates, heart-formed post its, Lego sets), you will need to send these materials to them 1-2 weeks before the class.

Participate in physical exercises

When participants are required to get up and move in an exercise, be more active or generally more playful than in a physical environment. It is important not to make exercises such as a dance move competition at the turning point look odd, embarrassing, or useless. To do so, examples should be shown by the facilitators/teachers, and the teachers should actively participate together with the students/participants. The teacher being the first one to start could be a great incentive to the students.

References

Manwaring, K., 2020. Lines of desire: The phenomenology of long-hand writing in creative praxis. New Writing 17 (2), 133-145.

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