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## Zeetings review: The mash-up of powerpoint and polling

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### Abstract

Zeetings is a relatively new tool in the rich world of Educational Technology (EdTech). It combines the standard features of a slide platform, such as PowerPoint, with online polling functionality, such as Kahoot! I began using Zeetings after feeling stifled by the passive nature of my online academic professional development sessions. I wanted to create more engaging lessons that allowed my academics to enjoy deeper learning opportunities. I present two case studies of professional development sessions at Kaplan Business School using Zeetings in two different pedagogical ways – live and flipped. Anecdotally, the academics who participated in the workshops enjoyed using the tool. From a facilitator's standpoint, Zeetings appeared to provide them with more quality engagement with the content. Embedding formative and summative polling activities throughout the session increased participant engagement and gave me the opportunity to tailor my session according to the responses received. This allowed me to provide just-in-time feedback to my participants which offered them deeper learning opportunities. Zeetings is an easy to use product that achieves its aim of creating enriching and active learning experiences.

### Introduction

What do you get if you mix Kahoot! with PowerPoint? You get Zeetings. Zeetings launched in Sydney in 2015 (Zeetings, 2015) and sits as a relatively new product within the rich world of Education Technology (EdTech). In episode 294 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast – '25 years of EdTech' – host Bonni Stachowiak and guest Martin Weller explore how this exciting space has grown over the last 25 years, since its radical beginnings in the late '90s of asynchronous learning, student-led learning journeys through hyperlinks, and network creation through blogging (Weller et al., 2020). These trailblazing learning tools came about from a simple question: "how can we construct knowledge differently?" (Weller et al., 2020). I was asking a similar question when I first came across Zeetings. I was looking for inspiration to create more engagement in my online academic professional development workshops. Being an active classroom facilitator, I was feeling stifled by the constraints

of online delivery, so I was intrigued by the Zeetings product. Combining the features of a regular slide-based presentation with the interactivity of an online quiz, it offered me the chance to transform my sessions from passive to active learning experiences. Following is a summary of the product and how it can facilitate sound pedagogy, a personal account of two case studies using Zeetings, and some suggestions for further classroom application. This review is based upon my own subjective view of the success of these workshops, rather than from a formally conducted study. However, I share these positive experiences with the sincere hope that you will be inspired to experiment yourself with Zeetings and perhaps conduct your own analysis in the future.

Zeetings is a tool that increases audience participation by "leveraging each participant's connected device... [getting] everyone involved... [giving] everyone a voice, and... [providing] presenters with unique insight into what each person is thinking" (Zeetings, 2016). To unpack that further, I think Zeetings ticks three important boxes of a modern active learning classroom. Firstly, it leverages participants' addiction to their personal devices by having it work for you, not against you. This is the 'if you can't beat them, join them' philosophy. Secondly, it helps you to efficiently gain whole class engagement – including the reserved members, which would ordinarily require you to pull out all your facilitation skills. Finally, and perhaps most crucially for achieving your lesson learning outcomes, it provides you with formative and summative data collection with which to tailor the lesson for optimal instruction.

Zeetings is free for Educators and Non-Profits but offers for-profit businesses a four-tier pricing plan. It has an intuitive design, with an easy to use dashboard. Although you lose features such as PowerPoint's voice recording and slide transitions, you gain more interactive features that support gamification. For example, each new slide can be text-based, a poll, a quiz, a survey, a word-cloud, or a multimedia page. You can also upload your existing PowerPoint slides, PDFs, or Canva files, directly into Zeetings so that you can embed these more interactive pages within your existing presentation. I have found this latter method makes for quick and easy conversions of existing resources from passive to active versions. Once you have created your resource, you can send your participants

the weblink for the presentation view of the page. Your participants can engage in your presentation synchronously or asynchronously. This allows you to facilitate interactive learning activities live within your session or use it in a flipped learning manner by having the participants complete the activities before the lesson. Similar interactive learning opportunities can be found in other quizzing products. For example, Kahoot! is the better product if you require a simple, fun, online class quiz. Standalone quiz platforms, such as Kahoot! and Socrative do have greater quizzing features. However, the combination of a presentation slide desk with embedded quizzing elements, makes Zeetings unique. With Zeetings, you can combine content and facilitate deeper learning opportunities in the one product.

Creating these deeper learning opportunities aligns with the company's goal to "transform presentations from one-way monologues into two-way conversations" (Zeetings, 2015). It is this mention of 'conversations' that inspired me to use the product because the learning benefits of having a two-way conversation with our students and workshop participants are well supported by learning science data. Gamification in online learning has been proven to increase motivation for learning and higher quality learning outcomes (Tan et al., 2016). In a recent study that assessed students' views on one gamification example, in-class, online polling activities, it found the students had an overall positive feeling towards these learning opportunities in three areas of study: behaviour-related engagement, emotion-related engagement, and cognitive-related engagement (Noel et al., 2015). Specifically, students who used the online polling during their lessons reported four positives: an increase in participation due to the anonymity of the exercise; increased enjoyment of the lesson; a deeper connection to the class; and an increase in understanding of lesson content (Noel et al., 2015). It was with two goals in mind: increased motivation for learning and better-quality learning outcomes, that I incorporated Zeetings into my online academic professional development workshops.

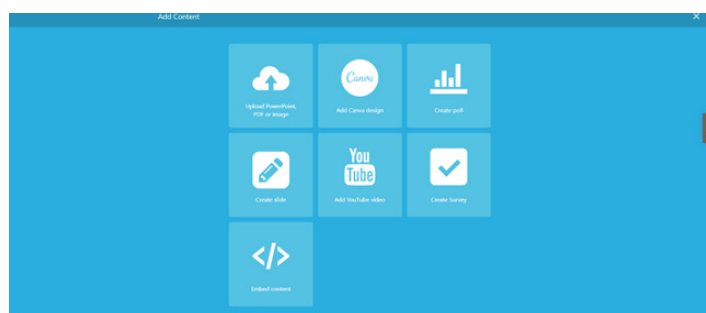


Figure 1: Adding content to your presentation - selecting an interactive slide.

### Case Study 1

My first professional development workshop using Zeetings was held online, using Zoom, in September 2018. The topic was 'problem-based learning' and was open to any academic to attend. My primary goal was to introduce this method of instruction to my academics. My secondary goal was to introduce them to Zeetings. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, I simply hoped that they would

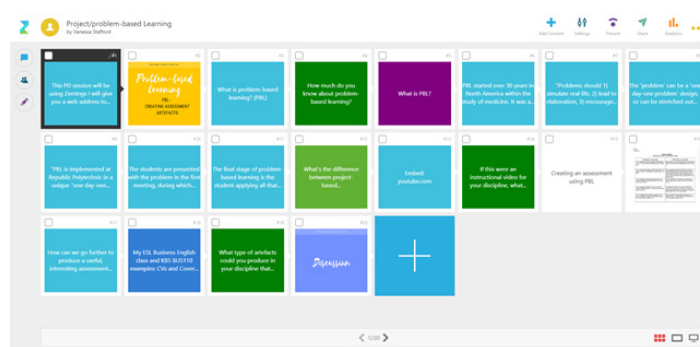


Figure 2: Your slides displayed in an easy to manage format.

be more engaged during the workshop. However, a more holistic reason is my desire for academic professional development sessions to help our Academics to be agile and adaptive in today's age of EdTech pedagogy. Many academics engage in online technology lessons that have been designed or presented by tech-savvy hosts who do not possess educational expertise, which often does not lead to practical, transferrable classroom skills (Flavell et al., 2019). That is why I embedded situated learning into my session, by having the lesson participants use Zeetings while learning a different topic, rather than Zeetings being the topic itself. This way, I gave the participants practice of an EdTech tool in a practical, transferrable manner.

My 20-slide guided workshop was punctuated with active-learning knowledge demonstration activities and was created wholly within the Zeetings platform. I began the session by benchmarking my participants' knowledge of problem-based learning. Having shown them the web link on my first slide, I instructed them to log on using their own devices. They now saw two presentation views: my Zoom window with the presentation shared on their PCs and the weblink version on their mobile devices. They answered the question: "how much do you know about problem-based learning?" using a five-star, Likert Scale. Their answers instantly coloured in the five stars on the main slide for all to see. The average score was three stars, indicating that I had an interested audience, ready to learn more.

The second active learning activity was a three-question summative quiz on the content just presented to them on problem-based learning. They were asked to match 'problem-based learning', 'project-based learning', and 'inquiry-based learning' to their meanings. This gave me an indication of how much they understood from the previous content. Two participants answered incorrectly, which allowed me to confirm their meanings before moving on. The third activity followed a cartoon video that demonstrated a problem-based learning activity. After watching, I asked the group to apply what they'd seen to their own experience and suggest a problem that would fit with their own subject's content. Using the free text tool, some suggested answers were "investment advice", "choosing the right holiday destination", and "an economic policy". This free text tool was useful in generating further discussion as the participants were asked to expand upon the answers. Reflecting on Zeetings' goal to facilitate two-way conversations, it became evident to me that the product is fit for purpose.

The final activity was another free text opportunity. I expanded the notion of problem-based learning to project-based learning and asked the participants to brainstorm ideas for real-world learning objects that the problem solving could result in. The four suggestions made little sense on their own, so I had each participant explain what they meant to be certain that they had understood what a real-world learning object is. It was clear after some explanations that some participants were a little off track. Had I not used this immediate summative feedback method, the confusion around this topic would not have been exposed. In this sense, the product allowed me to facilitate deeper learning.

There are positives and negatives to using Zeetings. What I found successful about this first attempt were the participants' ease of access to the online page; the participants' positive feelings towards being active participants in this new style of online workshop; the efficiency of asking for participants' contributions by mobile device compared to having only verbal eliciting; and finally, the way I was able to shape my lesson according to the answers I was receiving. What I didn't like at first, is the limited text function on the basic text slide. You are quite restricted in font size, positioning, and style, which can take some getting used to. Facilitating a live session using it also has some challenges. The first challenge I faced was doing both lesson facilitation and tech-support when it was also my first time using the tool in a live environment. The second challenge was discovering that my participants could jump ahead in my slides on their own devices and some had already answered upcoming quiz questions. This meant that a carefully planned summative quiz turned into a formative one for some. As someone who enjoys designing my lessons with careful scaffolding through the learning journey, this loss of control was a little annoying. Lesson facilitators may need to choose whether to specify at the start of the lesson that it's best to travel along the learning path together and not skip ahead or whether they will just go with the flow and allow participants to enjoy self-directed learning.

At the end of this lesson, the participants all expressed their enjoyment of the lesson and of the interactive nature of Zeetings. This experience of a one-hour, online, professional development workshop with academics, confirmed for me that using EdTech tools such as online quizzing and polling, increases motivation for learning and allows deeper engagement with the content.

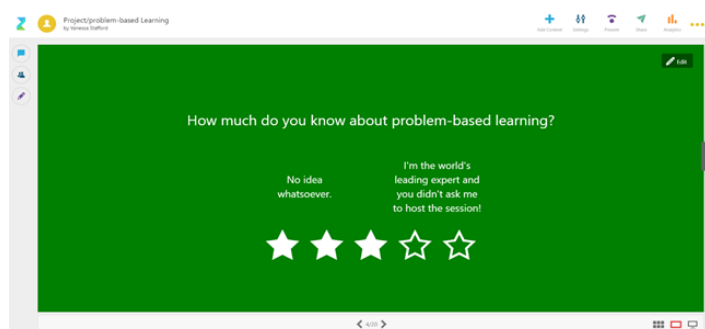


Figure 3: The first embedded activity slide was a benchmarking question.

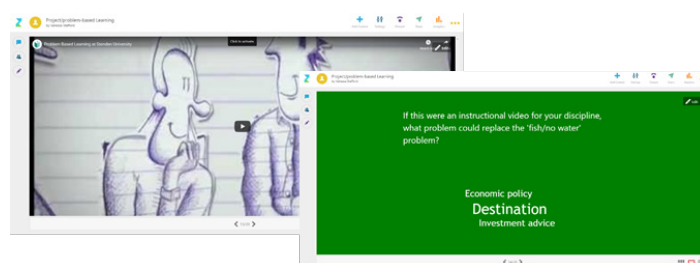


Figure 4: The third embedded activity was a video slide followed by a question slide to apply learning to the participants' own classrooms.

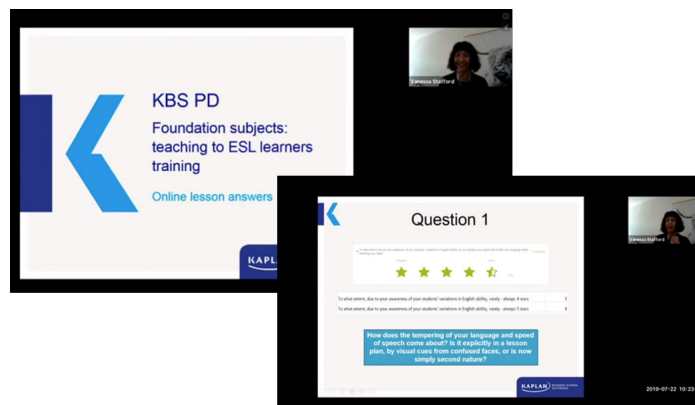


Figure 5: Flipped classroom part 2 – live session webinar screenshots.

## Case Study 2

My second attempt at Zeetings was run quite differently. It was a two-part flipped classroom design. Held in July 2019, the session was designed for our foundation subjects' teachers on how to better teach students with English language challenges. The syllabus design goal was to create a compulsory short course, using existing professional development resources housed on the academic learning space of our LMS. These resources were accessible at any time to these teachers but merely directing them to the files and suggesting they read them did not provide me evidence of their learning. By using Zeetings, I created an all-in-one learning experience, punctuating this existing content with summative, comprehension quiz questions. This gave me evidence of participation, levels of engagement, and results that revealed each participant's understanding of the content.

I emailed the web link to the participants and gave them a week to complete the asynchronous part of the lesson – set short readings followed by summative comprehension and reflection questions. During that week, I was able to log on and see the progress. Those who had a free Zeetings account had their answers and email addresses linked, while the others remained anonymous. Had I suggested everyone sign up, I could have targeted those who hadn't yet responded. This would be an efficient way of managing a large flipped classroom cohort. The second part of the lesson was an hour, interactive zoom session, where we could explore the answers together. Having already analysed the data, I was able to tailor this lesson to go deeper into the

areas I thought required it. The efficiency of having the data before the live session gave me an advantage that I didn't have in my first Zeetings session – a lesson plan that was truly targeted to my participants' individual needs. Again, the participants' feedback on Zeetings was positive and my goal of producing an interactive training resource that produced demonstrated learning outcomes was achieved.

Once I had used Zeetings twice, I felt comfortable with the tool. Despite some limited functionality that regular PowerPoint users may miss, the gamification opportunities are fair compensation. I found these features enhanced participation, informed richer discussions between participants, and allowed me to gauge the quality of learning that was occurring and offer just-in-time feedback if they were off-track. Despite not yet using this tool in the student classroom, I have no doubt that it would bring much-needed revitalisation of the traditional PowerPoint slide deck. Further applications could include: using your existing lesson slides to easily and efficiently enhance them with formative and summative activities; replacing the traditional pre-test revision class with a flipped classroom version, allowing you to tailor your revision lesson for more targeted instruction; or even providing your absent students with access to the content they missed, complete with their peers' engagement with it. Outside the classroom, you could even try turning your regular staff meetings into more engaging experiences. From my experience, Zeetings is a welcome addition to the world of EdTech, with the potential to facilitate more quality engagement in both the student classroom and the Academic professional development space. It's over to you now to give it a try.

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