19 Multiple Choice 4S (Significant, Same, Specific, Simultaneous)

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Full title - Multiple Choice 4S (Significant, Same, Specific, Simultaneous) Application Exercise

This strategy is used to teach an Organisational Management module to a second-year group of Accounting students, with approximately 40 students in the class.

The 4S Application Exercise forms a core part of the Team Based Learning (TBL) cycle. Students who are in permanent diverse teams (4-6 members) firstly complete pre-reading before class, followed by in-class individual and team quizzes, before moving to focus on the application of the concepts studied to real business scenarios.

The Multiple Choice 4S Application Exercises forms part of this final step and includes a structured format for the exercise focused on higher order critical thinking skills.

- **Significant** – the task must be as realistic as possible and represent the type of situation that the student might face in the workplace. It should also require higher order thinking, discussion and not be easily answered by referring to textbooks or other materials or the internet. It should require challenging application of the concepts learned to a real scenario.

- **Same** – All teams work on the same task / problem at the same time. This tends to increase the student interest in other teams' answers when they are reported – especially if they are different.

- **Specific** – a specific choice is required in the completion of the task e.g., what is the most important step…. or which of these is the best example of ……

- **Simultaneous** – teams report their answers all at the same time and therefore are not influenced by what other teams answer. This also allows for deeper exploration of what thinking led to the different responses from different teams.
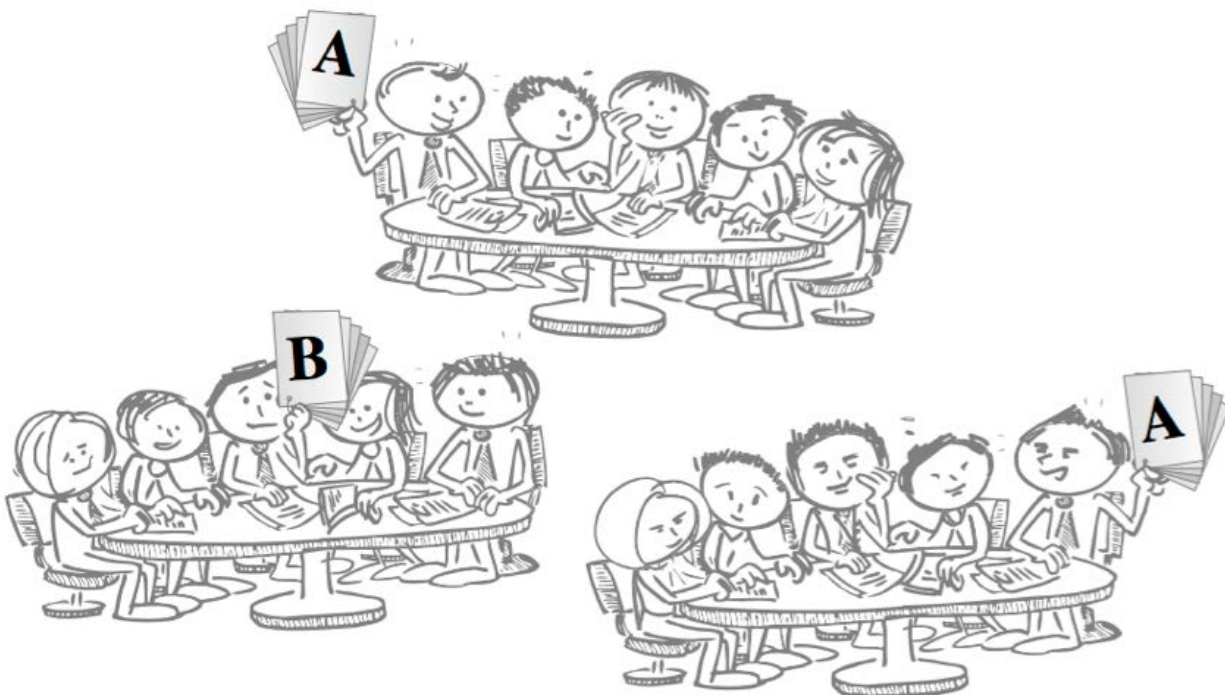

image from https://learntbl.ca/4s/

To implement the activity:

1. **Introduction** – explain the task required and provide details of how much time is allocated for the team to discuss and decide. Provide answer cards to each team e.g., 4 large cards with the letters A, B, C, D if using a multi choice set of answers.

2. **Team Task** – teams work independently to discuss, debate, work on the activity and reach a decision. Students can refer to their reading materials, notes, internet etc. in completing the task.

3. **Simultaneous reporting** – when the time has elapsed, request all teams to report their answer at the same time (e.g., hold up a card indicating answer A/B/C/D).

4. **Facilitated Class Discussion** – facilitate a whole class discussion on the reported results. For example, an instructor might start the discussion by saying *"2 groups selected 'B' and 3 groups selected 'C' – let's start with those that picked 'B'; please explain to everyone why you chose that answer?"* Next the instructor might say *"OK, teams who picked 'C,' how would you respond to them?"* and later *"I notice that no team chose 'D' – why did you not select that option?"*

An alternative approach is to ask teams to rank the different options (e.g. from most to least appropriate response. This necessitates the use of technology as opposed to a voting card. Teams can indicate their rankings using a "Moodleboard". Moodleboard enables students to post an electronic Post-It note with text, a link or an image. The Moodleboard can then be projected to the top of the room.

Some practical considerations:

Remain in 'Facilitator' mode for the reporting of the answers and resist the temptation to be in 'content expert' mode and provide correction and right answers early on as this may shut down further cross team discussion and engagement.

Allow time for students to respond to each other as it can take time for students to gather their thoughts and be prepared to defend their choices.

General Observations/Reflections

This activity can work as part of the TBL process or as a stand-alone activity.

The problems need to be challenging enough to engage the students and not too easy to solve by referencing the course materials.

Consider using multiple shorter application exercises (e.g., 15 minutes) rather than longer ones as some teams may finish early with longer tasks and start to disengage.

Resources

Team Based Learning Collaborative Website:
https://www.teambasedlearning.org/

Overview of the Moodleboard Tool - Foster learner collaboration with Board - a new Moodle plugin – Moodle