Teaching of module "Models and approaches of teaching General Studies"

Part II

A journey starting from *unexpected* *learning outcomes*

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Further evaluation

What I have done:-

- re-analyzing 10 student written assignments,

- searching for "signs" of learning outcomes which are not stated in the original module outline, using open-coding method,

- analyzing and categorizing the codes/scripts,

- 5 themes emerged.

The intended learning outcomes of this module are :-

'To enable students to

- CILO$_1$ design and implement an integrated approach that promote critical thinking and creative thinking;

- CILO$_2$ utilize inquiry-based learning approaches in the General Studies curriculum;

- CILO$_3$ adopt suitable assessment strategies and resources relevant to General Studies, and

- CILO$_4$ evaluate their own teaching in acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes peculiar to General Studies.'

(mainly around competence in teaching GS)

results

- *creative application* : some students have suggested new ways to apply the teaching approaches/models in their own contexts/topics, or adding some untaught elements in its application (e.g. new questioning methods)

- *creative elimination:-* Students spelled out the constraints of the teaching models, and suggested which parts should be eliminated, or when not to use them. (e.g. in teaching CPS)

- *enrichment and integration:-* For simple model or approach, students managed to enrich it through integrating it with other approaches. (e.g. integrating D-C-D into POE model)

results

- ***seeking balance :*** Though none of them mentioned explicitly good teaching is a balance of different demands, but many of them have suggested ways to balance between time constraints and new teaching, between critical thinking and affective sharing, between subject knowledge and thinking training, between divergent and convergent thinking, teacher-directedness and student-directedness, etc.

results

Thinking in systems approach:

- Instead of attributing their failure purely to one single factor (usually their teaching skills or student attitudes), some student teachers managed to relate the teaching problems to some contextual factors, including the original learning habits of the students and the traditional classroom practices/cultures, and made suggestion of this kind,

   " classroom teaching cannot change immediately,… but (the new elements) need to be infused continuously and gradually…..".

- A few of them even explicitly declared that, for new teaching of this kind, teachers need to leave room and resources to cope with the inaccurate estimation and the unexpected outcomes. One suggest,

   " teachers need to prepare some contingency measures… but after students familiar with the new learning mode (role-playing) ,….efficiency of the lesson would be much higher…."

my finding

Some students went beyond the pre-designed outcomes, they did demonstrate some "unintended" or "unexpected" learning outcomes.

(i.e. some students not only can apply the model in taught ways & evaluate their own teaching, but they also apply the model creatively, evaluate the teaching model, adapt or modify it, and, above all, they reconstruct the model and approaches taught, though only in a preliminary stage.)

Why so ?

Possible reasons are:-

- **accidence** (due to the new time-tabling arrangement, we need to arrange 2 lessons after FE, and so change original teaching plan)

- **human nature** (accommodation takes place naturally when students experience discrepancies between theory and practices; we cannot avoid it!)

- **student difference** (among a group, there are always some wish to go beyond the average or simply students think differently)

- **nature of teaching** (the relationships of process and outcome are not one to one, nor many to one, but one to many or many to many. Difficult to catch all !)

- **pressure of OBL** (lecturers are not sure whether we can achieve these outcomes, so we purposely do not put them explicitly in the module outline.)

- **professional judgment** (though we lack of full confidence, but we intuitively feel that these achievements are possible and have encouraged students to do so)

- **passion of lecturers** (we teach not only for fulfilling OBL requirements; teaching from our hearts.)

What next?

Two possible directions:-

- As lecturers, we may consider refining our module objectives next year to include these higher level learning outcomes (i.e. evaluate and reconstruct the teaching models), or

- We still do not have enough confidence/energy to face the OBL assessment procedures, therefore, we simply continue our teaching explorations in a free way. (Keep it the same, no pressure and no risk !)

my question

Can our OBL approach be more conducive to creative development of teachers ?

a literature search….

Possibilities: *"In OBE,* teachers have freedom of choosing their own content, teaching methods and assessment; ….. there are flexibility in course delivery and educational strategy…."

- Harden, R. M., Crosby, J.R. & Davis, M. H. (1999). AMEE Guide No. 14: Outcome-based education: Part 1 – An introduction to outcomes-based education. Medical Teachers, 21(1), 7-14.
- Killen, R. (2000). Outcomes-based education: Principles and possibilities. Unpublished manuscript, University of Newcastle, Faculty of Education.

Critics:- *quite many !*

- Fakier, M., & Waghid, Y. (2004). On outcomes-based education and creativity in South Africa. *International Journal of Special Education, 19*(2), 53-63.
- McKernan, J. (1993). Perspectives and imperatives – some limitations of outcome-based education. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 8*(4), 343-353.)
- Schwarz, G. (1994). The language of OBE reveals its limitations. Educational Leadership, 52(1), 87-88.

Can OBL model be like this?

Setting objectives

(Well-defined & ambiguous ones)

↓

Teaching & Learning
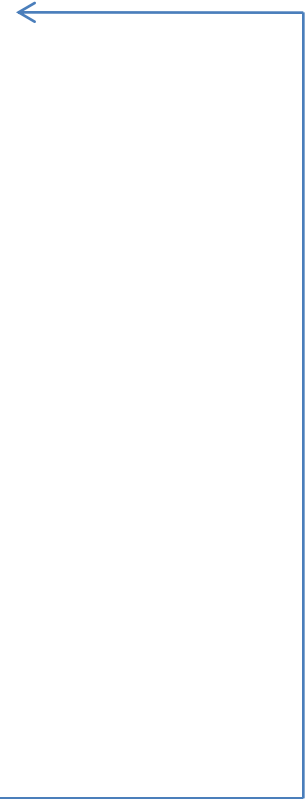
(regular & explorative)

↓

Evaluation

(formal & informal ones)

↓

Outcomes

(expected & unexpected)

(Each arrow represent "a creative generating process")

Can our OBL model also have these?

1. *Exploring the unknown.* Instead of allocating all resources (time and effort) to the predetermined objectives, we also allow some explorative teaching and learning, even though they may not directed towards the intended outcomes, or, their outcomes are not certain yet.

2. *Expecting the unexpected.* Instead of focusing only on the intended outcomes, we are also sensitive to, looking around for (i.e. evaluate informally)for the unexpected outcomes. Moreover, we recognize and reward students and teachers for these unexpected outcomes.

Can our OBL model also have these?

3. *Dreaming the impossible.* we allow the objectives to be modified in flexible time, and to include a certain portion of the objectives not well-defined, with no immediate outcomes, or not known how to achieve or assess yet (i.e. with some degree of ambiguity).

4. *Intuiting through*. What help us to make decisions in 1,2 and 3 ? Surely, objective evidence and scientific knowledge are not enough. Our intuitions can help. Intuition is a quicker, cheaper and more reliable kind of knowledge in our daily classroom teaching. Don't waste it !

What can facilitate these?

A conducive environment which
- tolerate ambiguities and failures
- facilitate on-going explorations and unplanned changes
- allow teachers to have some commitments in their teaching …

A certain degree of freedom, independence and continuity in teaching arrangement is important.

(Heartiest thanks to HKIEd. For 15 years, it is exactly this kind of environment has cultivated my creativity. I treasure it. Hoping it will not disappear!
Yet, I am not saying OBL is no good……)

my dream

Education can strike a "yin-yang balance" between….

ambiguous <- -> definite

explorative <- -> regular

informal <- -> formal

unexpected <- -> expected

teaching flexibilities <- -> OBL alignments

human intuition <- -> scientific objectivity

autonomy, trust <- -> standardization, accountability

In dressing,

I like purple,
Red is also fine.

A balance of purple and red is the best !

Welcome YOUR feedback,
especially the unexpected ones.