

Learning by Engaging and Teaching (LET) Programme

Reflective journal

CHUI Wan Yiu 1155031538

1) What were you engaged in 2014? As a demonstrator or TA in summer course? Event organizer? Internship?

I engaged in two summer courses provided for secondary school students. "Glimpses for the Ocean" is for higher form students (F.4-6), while "Introduction to Bionics" is for lower form students (F.1-3).

These courses consist of 3 parts, which are lectures, discussion sessions and practical sessions (including laboratory work and field trip). I involved in these courses as a teaching assistant in discussion sessions and a demonstrator in practical sessions.

2) Any difficulties on your work? How could you overcome?

Feeling nervous under unfamiliar condition

Since this is the first time I involved in courses as a teaching assistant and demonstrator, I have no idea what should I do. Although some course materials and related information were sent before the course, there was no detail and specific instruction that what should I do. However, I want to contribute myself as much as possible to the course. Therefore, I was extremely nervous and under pressure. This made me perform less well during the course.

I think I expected too much from myself. I was afraid that I could not contribute much and increased the workload of my colleagues. However, later I aware that other people did not expected that much from me. They knew that I am new to this job, so I may not know what to do and would give chance and time for me to learn. After that, I understood that I should give myself chance to learn how things work under unfamiliar condition (by observing how my experienced colleague carry out those parts) and should not give too much pressure to myself. Also, I can ask more and seek help from colleagues in order to learn faster, rather than dealing with all the problems by my own.

Lack of self-confidence

I was not confident enough in teaching students. Sometimes, students may ask difficult questions that I am not able to answer. Then I would be upset and think that I am not qualified to teach them. In addition, although the courses are focusing on biology,

some of the understanding required knowledge of other subjects (e.g. Physics), which I am not very familiar with, so I am not confident in teaching those parts.

Later, I realized that although I am majoring in biology, I would not know everything in this field, and would not be able to answer all questions without mistake. No one is perfect. Therefore, I should accept that I am not perfect, and it is just normal that I am not able to answer some question sometimes. It is too irrational to deny all my ability and knowledge just because I cannot answer a question or make a small mistake. Also there is a better way to handle this case. Although I cannot provide an exact answer to student, I can propose some possible answers for them to think about, or I can seek the answer and explain it to them later. There are many possible ways to deal with it, which are better than replying "I don't know".

In addition, I realized the importance of preparation before lesson. Even though there are parts that I am not specialize in, I can still get a basic understanding of them before lessons. Getting myself familiar with the course materials make me more confident during the lesson.

Although handling emotion and pressure properly and having self-confidence seems to be unrelated to teaching, they are necessary for good teaching. Learning these is not sufficient to make one to be a good teacher, but without learning these, one cannot have chance and space for improvement in teaching skills. After learning these, I hope I can improve my teaching skills efficiently next time.

3) How the training courses offered by LET Programme help you?

I attended the workshop offered by LET Programme. It helps me to aware the importance of developing a good teaching style and an effective teaching plan.

As mentioned above in part 2, I was annoyed by my emotional and confident problem during the course, and I tried my best to tackle with these problem. Therefore, I did not spend much on teaching skills and did not apply what I have learnt from the workshop with a well-organized manner. However, I still got some hint from the workshop to improve my teaching skills. For example, before thinking about how to hold the discussion session, I would consider the aim and the expected outcome first, which is mentioned as an essential part for developing a teaching plan in the workshop. Also, since it was mentioned in the workshop that different types/formats of activity should be carried out during the lesson to make it less boring and let student learn more efficiently, various types/formats of activity are carried out in the discussion session (e.g. letting

students to ask questions, inviting each students to answer questions, showing the related video/pictures and telling the lecture-related issue to students).

If I have another chance to hold a lesson/discussion session in the future, I would draft a time management plan before the lesson and write down a self-reflection right after the lesson immediately, in order to improve my teaching skills efficiently.

4) How can this experience help you?

This experience gave me a chance to reflect on myself and tackle with my emotional and self-confidence problem. Now I can make myself calm even if there are some unexpected incidents in the lesson and can come up with the solution quickly, and I am more confident to be a TA/demonstrator. I would focus more on my teaching skills next time.