

Introduction

This summer, I joined the LET Program and participated in the courses "Glimpses of Ocean" and "Bionics" as a teaching assistance. These courses provided insight of Science and biology to secondary school students. Most of the knowledge are beyond their understanding, yet are very interesting and captivating for them.

During the courses, we had to hold the discussion sessions and guide them to do different laboratory works.

Reflection

There were a number of challenges I had faced in these two courses.

In the course bionics, participants were junior form students. They were relatively active, so it was a bit challenging to hold some discussion with them entirely on the scientific knowledge. They would easily lose focus if you only keep talking. Thanks to the technologies nowadays, I was able to find some interesting and relevant videos on the internet for them. Thus, during watching the videos, they often have some questions, they shared some of their thoughts and opinions and I could tell them some facts about the videos. Even though some videos were quite common to us, as young students may not have much access to science, it was quite easy to draw their attention and to pass some knowledge to them.

However, it was another story in the course Glimpses of Ocean. Students in this course were in high school. They were more mature and they had wider knowledge in science. So what they are thinking is not the fact, but the process and reason behind the fact. During the discussion, very hellacious and fascinating questions often shown up. For some really challenging

questions, which also beyond our knowledge, what we did was do the searching and discussion together. There are a lot of information on the internet, so we dug them up and discuss what we thought about them. Some of them might be not so sensible, and therefore we discussed if we agree with it or not, with supporting reasons based on our knowledge when possible. I do like this process that although I could not answer their questions, we both had a great idea-exchange experience.

Students nowadays are very smart, they might know much more than you in certain aspect. Being a tutor, or even a teacher, you are not an authority. To better describe your role, you are a guide. Teachers can use their own experience and knowledge to guide student how to learn, but they also have to be open-minded, as there are always new discovery or theory every day. We cannot only stick to what we have known already, but deny any thoughts from students that sound logical.

Talking about challenges, laboratory is the one that have to be mentioned. There was one very complicated and long experiment for the students in Glimpses of Ocean. They had to analyze the sea water we collected earlier that day to find out the chemical and biological content of the samples. The style of doing laboratory work in college is quite different from that in secondary school. In here students have to follow the lab menu and do the lab by themselves. It was difficult for them since they are not familiar with the apparatus, instruments, chemicals or the principles. Therefore it was our job to guide them to do the steps one by one and explain some reactions for them so they would know what were they doing. I was not doing a great job at that time as I did not prepare well before the lab session. I should have revise the laboratory menu before so that I can guide the students to do their job better.

Another fundamental difficulty is about myself. I am not a very talkative or outgoing person. There are always some difficulties for me to chat with some

students. I believe chatting could actually shorten the distance between me and the students, so I tried very hard in doing so. When facing some quiet students, I might feel uncomfortable as both of us could be speechless at some moment. It was quite relieve for me in the end of the course that some of them approached us for contacts.

How the LET help me?

I didn't join the training course offered by LET this year, but I did join them last year. Those are very informative and practical training, although they are short, but very useful.

By learning how to create a lesson plan, I learnt that the key factor of an effective teaching is preparation. Even when you know the topic well, contents cannot be well delivered unless you have a good way to teach. Being organized can let the students learn in a good order, which also help them to understand and consolidate the content. From the feedback from students, I learnt that it would be very hard for them to concentrate on class if it was delivered in a messy manner.

Time controlling is also very important. There are always limited time but unlimited knowledge. It also affects the structure of the lessons, it would not be ideal if you need to end the lesson in a hurry.

Conclusion

I am so glad that I joint LET and teach as a teaching assistant for the past two summers. After these activities, I gained a lot of valuable experience about how to deliver knowledge to my students. This experience also gave me the very first-hand experience to be a teacher – a common path among science graduates. I wish this experience will accompany myself in the future, no matter which industry will I be doing.