

Reflective Journal

Faculty of Science

Learning by Engaging and Teaching (LET) Programme

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Teaching is never an easy job. I participated in the Learning by Engaging and Teaching (LET) Programme held by the faculty of science in summer 2013. I engaged in the course “Introduction to Bionics” organized by Dr. KC Chung from the biology programme. My role in this course was as a demonstrator during the experiments. This course lasted for 3 weeks and the participants were secondary school students from F.1 to F.3.

Being a demonstrator, we had to demonstrate the experiments in order to familiarize our students with them. Furthermore, we had to answer the questions raised by our students, regarding either the experiments or lectures. Sometimes, the theories introduced in the lectures were too unfamiliar to and difficult for the students. It was hard for us to explain to them too since we regarded the theories as something we supposed to know and understand. What we treated as “common sense” was actually a great challenge for those junior secondary school students. We had to change our approach to teaching them. My method was to put myself into their shoes – think in their ways. First of all, I would ask them step by step the theories that they had already learned. After having a brief idea on their basic knowledge, I would then further explain the new theories using simple wording. I would ask them if they got my point from time to time as to ensure their learning progress was more or less the same. I think this is important to make every single student understands the idea delivered. Fortunately, all of the students in my group understood the theories well after my explanation.

In my point of view, this course had several good practices that I recommend to retain if similar courses were to be held. To start with, I think the idea of the course itself is already one of the good points. Bionics has become a widely discussed and focused field by the manufacturers. Humans attempt to mimic and learn from Mother Nature for the production of better goods and equipment. This course provided a chance for the students to get a glimpse of this newly developed field and learn to appreciate the nature. I think this course is innovative as well as interesting. This for sure helps enhancing the students’ interest in learning.

Moreover, during the lab session, some live specimens of animals and plants were prepared for demonstration. For instance, when we were demonstrating the lotus effect, we prepared a whole lotus plant and some other plant leaves for comparison. Our students were very eager to try to drip water on the leaves and observe the result. Another example is sandfish. Sandfish is a kind of lizard which can burrow in the sand very quickly due to its smooth scale arrangement. We used a live sandfish to demonstrate the relationship between surface structure and resistance. The live specimens could effectively help arouse the students' interest and reinforce the theories we taught in the lessons.

In order to prepare us for the teaching part, this programme had organized a Teaching and Learning Workshop and a Leadership Day Camp for us. Both of the activities were inspiring and useful in our teaching. For the workshop, we learned some skills that can catch the students' attention during lessons, how to structure a lesson plan and practised teaching. I applied some of the skills taught in this workshop in the lab session. For example, I kept asking my students questions when I was setting up the experiment apparatus. I hoped to give them room for thinking more and maybe even out of the box. We were not supposed to give them every single answer at once after they raised any question. The lesson plan part was useful though we did not need to plan the lesson by ourselves. Yet, it would definitely be helpful if I engage in any teaching activity in the future.

Besides teaching, I think it is crucial to get closer to our students during the break time. When the students of my group were having the break, I discovered that they were obsessed with a mobile phone game. Coincidentally, I also played that game and we had some discussion on this game. This magical coincidence helped maintain good relationship between them and me. In addition, I think remembering the students' names is a simple but effective means to make a good impression. They seemed glad every time when I called their names. These are some simple ways to keep a good relationship with my students.

To sum up, this programme was an unforgettable and invaluable experience. It was very satisfying when I saw my students were glad about the activities arranged. Their attitude was quite positive and they were eager to learn. This definitely facilitated the teaching process and enhanced the teaching effectiveness. This programme provided me a new experience that I never had before. Though it was tiring sometimes, teaching brought me satisfaction way more than tiredness. I am very glad to participate in this programme and I hope my students can be benefited from this course.