

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

CELT Newsletter issue 3

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NEWS

CELT hosted a series of workshops during summer 2014

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New Faculty Orientation



Community Based Learning Initiative at ANU

Dr. Abdel Karim Daragmeh

The community based learning pedagogy focuses on engaging learners with the surrounding community. The benefit is mutual to both sides. The learners get to know the target community (potential future employer) up-close. They learn to negotiate with partners, to determine and meet their needs, and to present solutions to real and complicated problems. In turn, the target community benefits by having their projects, which need much time, effort and work force, done for them by students and their teachers. Examples on such projects are media campaign designs, English supplementary materials for grades 1-4, parking space planning in Nablus city, website design for NGOs, etc.

In August 2013, The Center for Excellence, as part of its effort to both improve the learning opportunity for ANU students and to serve the surrounding community, launched a community based learning program. The program included the planning, design and implementation for 10 CBL courses from the faculties of Education, Engineering, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Humanities, and Economics and Social Sciences. The implementation of the 10 courses was completed in May, 2014.

CELT is assisting in the establishment of the Center of Excellence & Creativity at Kadoorie by providing training and materials



CELT announces its workshop schedule for Fall 2014

The Art of Discussion Leading
September 2014

Project Based Learning
September 2014

Community Based Learning
October 2014

Assessment Methods
November 2014

Interactive Power points
December 2014

For more information on workshop content, visit our website: celt.najah.edu

For workshop registration, please call us at 88-2227 or send an email to celt@najah.edu

The Center for Excellence will be implementing 10 new courses during Fall 2014. We believe the CBL experience is one that is worth spreading. We include in this issue one article which contains important information on design and management of CBL courses for teachers who wish to use this new and exciting methodology in their own courses.

For further information, or to arrange for consultation on CBL methods, please e-mail us at celt@najah.edu or e-mail CBL coordinator Dr. Emad Dawwas at dawwas@najah.edu



Community Based Learning (CBL) Challenges

Dr. Emad Dawwas

The Community Based Learning (CBL) is an evolving learning approach that aims in the first place to bridge the gap between the theory and the practice by engaging the community and worksite as extensions of the classroom in the learning process. Three main attributes give the advantage to the CBL over conventional approach, including: (1) involving the community partner as a main actor in the learning process; (2) having the working environment as an extension to the classroom; and (3) considering the students as a center of the learning process. Despite the fact that all parties involved in the learning process have reached the consensus on these advantageous attributes, the CBL practice raises several challenges to the teachers and to the students. The main focus of this article is to briefly address these challenges that usually face CBL classes, especially those taught for the first time.

The first requirement of a CBL class is to plan to have three actors in the CBL learning process instead of two players as in the traditional process. While the teacher and the students are the only players in a traditional course, the CBL

approach involves the community partner as a third player which results in three challenges: (1) the first challenge a CBL class might face is the difficulty in engaging a community partner who really needs the service offered by the class and is ready to collaborate and exchange visits and experience; (2) the second challenge is the difficulty in the coordination with the community organizations due to the lack of experience of these organizations in such kind of learning-service activities; this is especially true when the partners are given a role in the in-class activities and sessions; and (3) the challenge of involving the community partner in the evaluation process in order to assess the students' performance during their work in the field and to assess the quality and the importance of the project output.

A second requirement of a CBL class is to expand the learning environment by designing fieldwork in addition to the classroom activities. Three challenges stem from this point: (1) the difficulty in integrating the class activities and the field activities within a well-structured action plan; (2) preparing the required evaluation techniques by which the instructor can track and evaluate the students' performance in the field, in addition to the aforementioned community partner fieldwork evaluation; and (3) within the same context, the third challenge is to achieve the necessary balance between the classroom materials and class work on the one hand, and the project work and the community activities on the other hand.

The last requirement for the CBL course to be discussed in this brief article is the focus of the learning process on the students' role, either in the class or in the field. This, in turn, results in students' resistance during the course activities due to the extra effort they have to invest. This can be mainly attributed to the unfamiliarity of the students with the new learning approach which challenges them to move out of the traditional classroom and beyond their comfort zone. Another reason for students' resistance might be the lack of time in their schedules to fulfill the fieldwork requirements and their weak time management skills.

In conclusion, all these challenges can be attributed to the lack of the actors' experience (the instructor, the community partner and the students) in the CBL requirements. This fact has been recognized by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) team who has been working on promoting the CBL for two years. With the constant support from the university administration, CELT has offered a series of workshops and training sessions during the past two years in order to offer the opportunity for faculty members to exchange their experiences and ideas about the CBL. CELT will continue its effort in holding CBL workshops through which participants will learn fundamental strategies that are necessary to design high quality CBL classes, and will discuss the expected challenges including the aforementioned ones and how to overcome them.