Unpack the Constructive Alignment at Course Level

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Introduction

The state of affairs in modern society requires numerous competencies such as creativity, communication skills, innovation, and problem-solving ability. It is a fact that curriculum content, instructional practices, and evaluation methods should align to the contemporary requirements in ways to enhance permit learners to develop such competencies (Lee, K., and Kim, S., H., 2018). The presentation during Webinar 2 touched on the constructive alignment at the course level and the following were mentioned:

1. Competency and Learning Outcomes (Objectives)
2. Concepts and skills
3. Teaching strategies and formative assessment
4. Summative assessment as evidence of competence achievement

In this short section, we are going to give an example of competence and its subsequent learning objectives. Then, we look at examples of concepts and skills to be developed. In addition, decide what teaching strategies to use to help learners grasp the concept, develop the skills, and decide the learning activities translated by formative assessment to help learners interact with the given content. Finally, establish evidence using summative assessment demonstrating that learners have acquired the established competence.

Constructive Alignment Model

The template of the matrix we are going to use is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A contains the competence and the learning objectives

B contains the concepts and the skills to be developed

C contains the learning strategies and the learning activities to reinforce the learning process using formative assessment

D contains evidence to ascertain that the learner has developed the competence. The matrix is shown below with the description of each component:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies/Outcomes</th>
<th>Concepts &amp; Skills</th>
<th>Teaching Strategies &amp; Formative Assessment</th>
<th>Assessment (Summative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes/Objective 1:</strong></td>
<td>What do learners need to be able to do as a result of the learning experiences in this course?</td>
<td>How can these concepts and skills be taught to promote deeper and more significant learning?</td>
<td>What evidence can learners provide to demonstrate their ability to meet the intended outcome?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concepts:</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should learners understand?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do students need to analyze, evaluate, or create?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills:</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do learners need to be able to do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Competency with Performance Statements (Component A of the Matrix)**

In this example, we are using a competence related to “English Communication” required for learners to develop with the aim to enhance their communication skills. Learners can achieve this competence in the 3rd year of post-secondary level. With column A, we start with the outcomes/objectives using the backward design where the method starts by setting the goals or desired results of the learning experience of the learners. When writing the learning objectives related to the established competence, the following attributes are considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Clarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written using action verbs – reference to Bloom’s Taxonomy cognitive processes</td>
<td>Focus on the learner and describe what is required learners to do immediately “after” they interact with the content and “outside” their educational experience</td>
<td>The expectations are realistic and reasonable given the learners’ capabilities (level) and the available resources and timeframes.</td>
<td>The statements are complex enough to prompt learners the effort to learn and progress in the knowledge acquisition and application, evaluated through appropriate content and well-thought assessment strategies.</td>
<td>The outcome statements are short, well-constructed, clear, and easy-to-interpret sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The performance statement contains an action verb that translates what a learner should do to move towards the achievement of the competence.

**Performance Statement**

- Learn from written passages by discerning the main idea or key facts.
- Locate or infer from their context the meaning of unknown or technical words.
- Understand the basic correspondence, instructions, and rules as portrayed in the text.
- Draw logical conclusions from the text, and read between the lines to find underlying meaning.

The above statement can be written in the format of learning objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (SMART):

At the end of this chapter, learners should be able to:

- Learn from written passages by discerning the main idea or key facts.
- Locate or infer from their context the meaning of unknown or technical words.
- Comprehend the basic correspondence, instructions, and rules as portrayed in the text.
- Draw logical conclusions from the text, and read between the lines to find underlying meaning.

**Evidence (Summative Assessment – Column D of the Matrix)**

After the learning objectives are set, it is strategically important to determine the evidence that will ascertain that learners have achieved these learning objectives and in the process, confirm that they have achieved the established competence. Therefore, workout key assessment tasks to demonstrate meaningful application of real life knowledge and skills that are relevant to the roles learners will fill in connection with the competence at hand. These types of assessments can come in various forms depending on what the objectives states.

The following are possible questions for the competence at hand and taking into consideration the learning objectives. We are using the model of Wiggins, G . and McTighe, J. (1999) to set the evidence and we can provide to the learners the liberty to choose all or some of the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Visual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are an activist on the ideas of keeping rivers clean because of its numerous advantages of preserving</td>
<td>As an activist, create a podcast or a radio show debating your ideas of keeping rivers clean because of its</td>
<td>As an activist, create a poster or a web page informing the public about your ideas of keeping rivers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
clean water, the health of the fish, human and animals using that water. Write down a communication campaign to mobilise the population in your community to support your ideas and your movement.

numerous advantages of preserving clean water, the health of the fish, human and animals using that water.

clean because of its numerous advantages of preserving clean water, the health of the fish, human and animals using that water.

Once the competence and the related evidence are well set, it is now time to develop the concepts and the related skills that will drive learners towards the achievement of the competence.

Remark: Take note that learners will not be assessed using the summative assessment above before they go through the column B and C.

Concepts and Skills (Component B of the Matrix)

Concepts:
What should learners understand? What do students need to analyze, evaluate, or create?
In this chapter, learners will be introduced to the method of writing for communication purposes. They will learn how to write an essay, containing the introduction of an idea for example, the development of that idea, and the conclusion towards the merit of such idea. Learners will also learn how to assess that the idea is the best based on the community context and if the idea is aligned to the community actual needs or potential needs.

Skills:
The learner will also learn to develop other type of communication strategies, such as posters, podcasts, radio show for debate, website content, for example, a blog prompting for comments from the community. Using the skills already acquired from the ICT literacy course, learners will learn how to structure the written idea using a word processor and convert that document into a webpage. They will learn how to produce an audio resource using their mobile phones to mobile the community around their ideas or produce a poster using a publisher software.

Remarks: Take note that at this stage, we assume that the learning materials about the concepts exist already in the form of a textbook or other forms of learning resources, i.e. website, videos, etc.

Teaching Strategies & Formative Assessment (Column C of the Matrix)
To help learners visualise the importance of written communication, the teacher may tell a story about an event that took place in the community where the learners leave. The teacher may portray that story through a written article in the local newspaper or a short radio show programme recorded on the teacher’s mobile phone, etc. We call this part a bridge-in to hook learners’ attention before the start of the lesson. After the bridge-in, share the learning objectives and implement a diagnostic evaluation (pre-evaluation) to find out what the learners know about the lesson of the day. To ensure active participation of the learners, implement the group discussion method, role-play, etc. to keep learners doing things while learning. Engage learners in essay, poster, radio show (debate) production focusing on writing exercises (in class and outside the classroom). Before ending the lesson,
provide to learners a post-evaluation through questioning for example, with the aim to find out if they have achieved the learning objectives set for the lesson.

To ensure that learners will attend class already prepared, give them access to the lesson learning materials beforehand to go through at home (flip classroom method), with some exercises to help them interact with the content.

Take note that classroom (or outside classroom) activities (formative assessment) are critical to reinforcing the learning process and to give feedback to the teacher about the learners’ progress. It is important to implement the mastery learning to ensure learners master the content at hand and provide differentiated teaching opportunities for those who are not doing well based on the outcomes of the formative assessment. When learners work out the given activities individually or in group, it is paramount to give the feedback individually or as a group. The feedback should inform the learners where they did well and where they did not with opportunities to try again.

The above illustration allows learners to try repeatedly until they succeed to achieve the standards set for the chapter/unit.

At the end of the chapter or a set of chapters, provide the summative assessment (tests) to collect evidence if learners have developed the competence.

**Remark**

In the third Webinar, we will discuss in details about assessment for competency-based curriculum.