

The Usefulness of Curriculum Mapping in Writing Learning Modules

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the usefulness of curriculum mapping in teaching Asian History. As the High School Social Studies Coordinator, I found it essential to conduct a research on how curriculum maps enable the teachers in our academic unit to articulately plan the curriculum and effectively deliver instruction. Is curriculum mapping useful in teaching Asian History? In this study, I have obtained primary research data by examining the Term 3 Grade 7 curriculum map for Academic Year 2014-2015 with the unit topic “Regional and Global Conflicts in Asia”. Alignment of the assessments and activities to the learning competencies and national standards was thoroughly checked. To ensure the soundness of the said curriculum map, a formal classroom observation was conducted to validate the delivery of instruction of the Social Studies Teacher vis-à-vis curriculum preparation. Moreover, data analysis was conducted based on the examination of the sample curriculum map and a performance evaluation report was prepared based on the formal classroom visit. Likewise, mentoring was done through a post-observation conference with the said teacher. As a tool for analysis, communication and planning, curriculum mapping has enabled the Social Studies Teacher in the study to thematically align curriculum, instruction and assessment anchored on national standards. Through the creation of such pertinent document, the said teacher has succeeded in planning and delivering instruction in terms of determining the learning goals and aligning the standards with various assessments and activities.

Keywords: curriculum, instruction, curriculum map, learning module

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Introduction

The Understanding by Design (UbD) Framework and the Learner Centered Learning Environment (LCLE) Approach

The advent of the K to 12 Basic Education Program introduced by the Department of Education (DepEd) aims to offer a seamless, responsive, enriched, decongested and learner-centered brand of education. In response to this educational transformation, De La Salle Santiago Zobel (DLSZ) continues to adopt the Learner Centered Learning Environment (LCLE) approach in instruction. To complement this approach, the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework was introduced in Academic Year 2010-2011 by the school's consultant and resource person, Dr. Miguel Q. Rapatan.

There is a logic in combining the LCLE approach with the UbD framework. To begin with, both are not only mutually supportive of one another, but both need one another. Inside the classroom, teachers deal with four (4) important educational elements: who they teach (students), where they teach (learning environment), what they teach (content) and how they teach (instruction). Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) assert that "if teachers lose sight of any one of the elements and cease investing effort in it, the whole fabric of their work is damaged and the quality of learning impaired".

UbD is predominantly a curriculum design model. Its focus is what and how teachers teach, and what assessments to collect as evidence of learning. Its main goal is "delineating and guiding application of sound principles of curriculum design" (Tomlinson and McTighe, 2006). Moreover, it highlights instruction for understanding for student success. On the other hand, LCLE is predominantly an instructional design model. It focuses on who we teach, where we teach and how we teach. Its main goal is "ensuring that teachers focus on processes and procedures that ensure effective learning for varied individuals" (Tomlinson and McTighe, 2006). Furthermore, differentiation models address the imperative of differentiating quality curriculum (Tomlinson and McTighe, 2006).

Why the UbD Framework is Effective in DLSZ

Effective Use of the UbD Framework by Teachers¹

The UbD framework has helped enhance the delivery of instruction in DLSZ because of the following developments:

- Since Academic Year 2013-2014, teachers have been designing curriculum maps, which show alignment of standards and competencies with assessments and activities. They thematically align assessment, curriculum and instruction anchored on the Lasallian Guiding Principles (LGPs) to achieve student understanding of key concepts.
- Also in Academic Year 2013-2014, teachers have been constructing unit assessment matrices (UAM) which reflect competencies vis-à-vis assessment items and scoring guides. They design assessments that require students to be self-reflective, to develop their own perspective and to understand others' points of view.

¹ Castillo, L. M. (2014). *Initial Evaluation of the Understanding by Design Framework in Writing Learning Modules*. DLSU Conference Series 2015 (http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/conferences/dlsu_research_congress/2014/food-nutrition-proceedings.asp)

The revision of the learning module components was implemented in Academic Year 2014-2015 to suit the new pedagogy. Teachers plan learning modules in such a way that assessments and activities are aligned with the learning goals as evident in the curriculum maps.

Through the UbD framework, teachers are able to organize their thoughts, put these into writing and implement these in instruction.

Enriched Student Learning²

With DLSZ espousing a progressive pedagogy, students have become more reflective, creative, critical and resourceful problem-solvers. This supports the school's vision of producing excellent graduates, who are also expected to possess Lasallian values and attitudes that enable them to become responsible Filipino citizens. Overall, the school promotes the attainment of developmental and holistic learning of its students.

Students are given many opportunities to learn effectively inside the classroom. In planning the curriculum and delivering instruction, teachers are guided by national standards that they align with the LGPs. By doing so, the learning goals – acquisition, meaning making and transfer – are articulated through different processes like mapping the curriculum, constructing assessments and writing the learning modules. These aforementioned goals consistently reflect the need for students to construct meaning from the facts they acquire and use this in new situations that are real-world and complex.

The Struggle in Aligning the Curriculum Components

Even with the successful use of the UbD framework based on a study I have made, a challenge still persists among DLSZ teachers in terms of curriculum preparation – alignment. This pertains to the struggle in aligning the standards and learning competencies set by DepEd with the assessments and activities prepared by the teachers.

One effective way to address such concern is through curriculum mapping. Curriculum mapping is a system that thematically aligns assessment, curriculum and instruction. In DLSZ, the curriculum components include the Vision Mission of the school, the standards and competencies found in the Curriculum Guide, unit content, assessments, activities and resources. Essentially, curriculum mapping answers the key question “How do we put all these together in a useful and meaningful way?”

Methodology

I have obtained primary research data by examining the Term 3 Grade 7 curriculum map for Academic Year 2014-2015. The unit topic was Regional and Global Conflicts in Asia, which focused on World War II in Asia. Alignment of the assessments and activities to the competencies and national standards was thoroughly checked. Moreover, a formal classroom observation was conducted to the faculty member who designed the curriculum map, Teacher Z, to validate the delivery of instruction vis-à-

² based on the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) report on Curriculum and Instruction for the High School Department of DLSZ written and consolidated by the researcher

vis curriculum preparation. Data analysis was conducted based on research findings and qualitative report based was written based on performance evaluation in the delivery of instruction. A post-observation conference with the said teacher was conducted thereafter.

Results and Discussion

The following were the pertinent findings in studying the usefulness of a curriculum map in teaching Asian History based on a thorough examination of the said document and a formal classroom observation of Teacher Z:

- Alignment of the Enduring Understanding (EU) and Transfer Goal (TG) with the Content Standard (CS) and Performance Standard (PS)

The map ensured that the standards, both the CS and PS, were articulated in the third column. These standards were provided by DepEd and stipulated in the Araling Panlipunan Curriculum Guide 2014. Such were translated in English since the medium of instruction in DLSZ is English. The EU and TG were appropriate and sound since all these were aligned with the standards. The EU, “Students will understand that the regional and global conflicts contributed to the development and formation of Asian nations” was aligned with the CS, “A student will demonstrate understanding of the changes, development, and continuity among Asian countries in both transitional and modern ages.” Moreover, the Essential Question (EQ), “Students will find the answer to the question: How did the regional and global conflicts affect Asia”, answered the EU, which showed alignment. Likewise, the TG “Students will be able to independently use their learning to support an advocacy that promotes a culture of peace” was aligned with the PS “A student will demonstrate critical analysis on the changes, development, and continuity among Asian countries in both transitional and modern ages.”

- Alignment of Learning Competencies vis-à-vis Assessments and Activities

All of the target competencies of the learning unit, Regional and Global Conflicts in Asia, were aligned with the designed assessments and selected activities. Table 1 summarizes the alignment stated.

ASSESSMENT LEVEL	LEARNING COMPETENCY	CODE	ASSESSMENT	ACTIVITY	ALIGNMENT	
					Yes	No
Knowledge	Identify orally and the changes in Asian nations brought by regional, global, and internal conflicts	AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12	FOR Picture analysis of pre-war and post-war Asian cities (Evaluation tool: teacher feedback)	Picture gallery of war-torn Asia with interactive lecture	Yes	No
	Enumerate in writing the causes and effects of global, regional and other conflicts in Asia	AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12	SUM Cause and effect table (Evaluation tool: 1 point each)	Textbook reading and teacher-led instruction		
Process	Interpret orally illustrations of different perspectives of Asians about the conflicts during the 20 th century orally.	AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12	FOR Critique on wartime editorial cartoons (Evaluation tool: teacher feedback)	Photo gallery of pre-war and post-war Asians	Yes	No
	Justify in writing the different sentiments of Asians on the wars and conflicts in writing.	AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12	SUM Essay on Asian perspectives of wars and conflicts (Evaluation tool: rubric)	Teacher-led instruction and textbook reading		
Understanding	Express thoughts and opinions in writing about the effects of wars and conflicts in Asia through writing.	AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12	FOR Reflective essay on comparing the Philippine experience of colonization to other Asian nations (Evaluation tool: rubric)	Picture analysis, textbook reading, teacher-led discussion	Yes	No
	Support an advocacy to end wars and conflicts in Asia using social media.	(AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12)	SUM #peace4asia Twitter campaign (Evaluation tool: teacher feedback)	Viewing of UN International Day of Peace campaign videos		
Product/ Performance	Make a message board supporting an advocacy for maintaining peace in Asia.	AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12	FOR #peace4asia Grade 7 message board (Evaluation tool: teacher feedback)	Viewing of UN International Day of Peace campaign videos	Yes	No
	Create a tourist poster or war-affected places in Asia.	AP7TKA-IIIe-1.13/ AP7KIS-IVe-1.12	FOR Tourism poster of war-affected Asian cities (Evaluation tool: rubric scoring)	<i>*none written</i>		

Table 1: Alignment Observed in the Different Levels of Assessment

- Alignment of the Performance Task (PT) with the Transfer Goal (TG)

Alignment was observed between the TG “Students will be able to independently use their learning to support an advocacy that promotes a culture of peace” and the PT, which was articulated in the GRASPS Narrative. Figure 1 illustrates the said narrative.

With the recent events of religious and ideological conflicts in Asia such as the ISIS uprising and the unfortunate fate of the *Fallen 44* SAF policemen, it is time for all of us to think of ways to achieve peace. Your group is tasked write an editorial article answering this question: *Can peace in Asia be achieved by force or by peace talks?* This shall be accompanied by an editorial cartoon (integrated with Art), must be written in Filipino (integrated with Filipino), and will be included in a newsletter (integrated with Computer). The output shall be graded based on content, relevance and creativity.

Figure 1: GRASPS Narrative for the Performance Task

Supporting an advocacy is a practical and concrete way of applying the concept of promoting a culture of peace. Hence, the PT completely supported the TG.

- Formal Observation Report

A list of commendations and recommendations were given to Teacher Z based on the formal visit. Figure 2 presents the classroom observation narrative report.

FORMAL OBSERVATION			
Teacher	Teacher Z	Status	Probationary 1
Date/Time	February 5, 2015 8:00-9:00 AM	Year and Section	7H
Focus of Observation	General	Topic	World War II in Asia
Notes		Recommendations/Comments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrived class on time: 8:00 AM • Preliminaries were done: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ opening prayer ❖ expectations setting and hashtags through agenda listed on the chalkboard • News reporting proceeded: SAF44 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is force a means? - How do we achieve peace in Mindanao? • Review of the previous lesson was observed • Motivational activity: picture analysis • Moral dilemma • Video excerpt • Class discussion proceeded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ asked P questions ❖ used primary source: Truman's diary/journal entries • Wrap-up/closure/synthesis was not observed 		<p>Commendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Content mastery was evident. 2. Inputs and insights were shared in relation to topics discussed. 3. Good and consistent communication skills were observed. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For the news report, give basic facts about the <u>Bangsamoro</u> Basic Law (BBL) to highlight the concept of peace and the peace process/agreement. 2. Allow the class to give their own feedback regarding the picture analysis. 3. Deepen the discussion by asking more <u>understanding</u> questions. 4. Provide collaborative activities using the MLD or any form of media – this is to implement blended learning. 5. Since Carlos P. Romulo was mentioned in the course of the discussion, share some stories about this great diplomat. (e.g. seal of the United Nations) 6. Draw out generalizations as a way to close the session. 	

Figure 2: Observation Narrative for Teacher Z

Further, an evaluation instrument was used for a more specific and detailed examination of Teacher Z's delivery of instruction. Figure 3 shows the teaching performance evaluation.

 De La Salle Santiago Zobel School Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City			
PART I: TEACHING PERFORMANCE			
A. Observation Form			
Name of Faculty: TEACHER Z		Department: HS SOCIAL STUDIES	
Evaluator: LEAH MARIE T. CASTILLO		Date: FEBRUARY 5, 2015	
Year and Section: 7H		Time: 8:00-9:00 AM	
Subject: ASIAN HISTORY		Topic: WORLD WAR II IN ASIA	
This assessment tool is aimed at looking into the effectiveness of the teaching-learning processes in class. Based on the merits of the classroom observation, the rater/evaluator shall assign the following points:			
3 - extensively observed		1 - limitedly observed	
2 - adequately observed		0 - not observed	
Instruction			Remarks
1	Shows mastery of the subject matter.	3	
2	Connects/relates the lesson to the previous day's activities/tasks/assignments.	3	
3	Applies appropriate strategies to guide and assess students' comprehension of the day's lesson.	3	Highlight the use of the MI theory in the Cmap and LM
4	Engages students in activities that facilitate the development and use of the macro skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) in the production of related outputs.	3	
5	Uses and applies appropriate teaching aids/technology effectively.	3	
6	Relates the lessons covered with relevant concepts to integrate lessons effectively with _____ (values/LGPs/other subjects/real-life situations).	2	Deepen the discussion by relating the topic to the LGP/s
7	Asks questions that enhance higher-order thinking skills and allows for appropriate wait time/action zones for students' responses/answers.	2	Deepen the discussion by asking more understanding questions
8	Uses the medium of instruction correctly.	3	
9	Speaks on the level of student's understanding and in a well-modulated voice.	3	
10	Adjusts level of difficulty of lessons to students' needs and capabilities.	3	
11	Is aware of students' verbal and non-verbal acceptance or rejection of ideas and responds appropriately.	3	
12	Maximizes class time for efficient learning of students.	3	Lesson flow is organized
13	Maintains a flexible and healthy environment that is reflective of effective classroom routine and proper decorum.	3	
14	Implements the lesson as planned and/or adjusts the lesson as needed.	3	
15	Employs ways to assess students' performance vis-à-vis learning objectives.	3	
16	Processes the days lessons/activities to facilitate progression towards the new knowledge.	2	Allow the class to give their own feedback regarding the picture
17	Provides closure for the day's lesson.	1	Draw out generalizations as a way to close the session
18	Encourages students to ask questions and share insights.	3	
TOTAL:		2.72	

Figure 3: Evaluation of Teaching Performance of Teacher Z

Essentially, Teacher Z has succeeded in planning in terms of thematically aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment anchored on national standards. Also, he succeeded in delivering instruction based on his above average rating of 2.72.

Conclusions

Curriculum mapping is one of DLSZ's curricular breakthroughs. Since Academic Year 2013-2014, teachers have been designing curriculum maps, which show alignment of standards and competencies with assessments and activities. They thematically align assessment, curriculum and instruction to achieve student understanding of key concepts. Through the creation of such document, teachers are also able to check gaps and redundancies as regards learning competencies as well as identify opportunities for integration among subject areas.

In essence, curriculum mapping has enabled Teacher Z to accomplish the following:

- organize his thoughts and put these articulately into writing

Once the curriculum map of the said teacher is in place, various learning activities and assessments were then actualized inside the classroom. A formal visit enabled me to monitor and validate the delivery of instruction.

- prepare different activities to suit learning styles evident among students

With the learning goals and assessments given ahead, the teacher found it easy to develop such activities. In effect, his classroom experience as per our post-observation conference, became more dynamic and meaningful because he considered what learning styles and activities work best for each student.

The abovementioned findings show that curriculum mapping is useful in teaching Asian History. At heart, this curricular development has helped the teacher in this study in the planning and delivery of instruction in terms of determining the learning goals, constructing assessments and preparation of different learning activities.

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