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Teaching Cycle Number 2

One-Minute Paper

Overview of the Module

I carried out my second teaching cycle at the same time as my first teaching cycle. I was introduced to the one minute paper during the PGCTHE induction session and I decided to use this technique for one of my teaching cycles. During the induction we were asked to illustrate our proposed teaching cycle on a poster and explain to the rest of the PGCTHE members how we intended to carry the cycle forward and what we wanted to get out of the experience. (see attached poster in Appendix).

I used the one minute paper technique during the delivery of teaching of Land Law and Equity & Trusts in January 2008. Land Law is a Level III module which is core to the LLB Law degree scheme and which has up to 200 students enrolled on the course. Equity & Trusts is also a Level III subject which is core to the LLB Law degree scheme and which has more than 200 students enrolled on the course.

Rationale and Aims

As mentioned in the first teaching cycle, Land Law and Equity & Trusts are complex subjects which students do not always find easy to relate to or understand. During lectures it is not always clear to me whether the information I am transmitting to the students is getting across. With this teaching cycle I wanted students to briefly summarise in a few phrases what they had learnt in the lecture; I also wanted them to highlight any confusing or unclear aspects of the lecture as well.

At the end of a random lecture I would give students one minute to write down on a piece of paper the answer to two questions:

- What was the main point of the day’s lecture?
- What areas did you find to be unclear?

The first question directs students to focus on the big picture, that is, what is being learned, whereas the second seeks to determine how well learning is proceeding. At the end of the
minute students were asked to hand their notes in to me so I could process the information they had provided about the lecture. I decided to use this technique because it was quick and easy and I felt it would be effective to gather some feedback as to how and what my students were learning during my lectures and to be able to identify areas that were not so clear so as to cover them again in future lectures for further clarification.

The aims of the second teaching cycle were the following:

- To allow students to briefly summarise what they had understood from the lecture
- To allow students to briefly highlight areas they had not understood during the lecture
- To verify whether my lecturing was effective in putting the necessary information across to the student
- To identify areas that students found difficult to understand so as to be able to find ways to explain them again.

Review of Literature

Classroom Assessment techniques (CATs) have been designed to allow teachers the benefit of observing instantaneous feedback from students in the classroom and have been used in numerous higher education environments. They have proved to be very useful in the evaluation of student learning and the direction of teaching.

A good example of a CAT is the one minute paper. The one-minute paper is a "modest, relatively simple and low-tech" innovation designed to obtain regular feedback from students. In the final few minutes of class, the teacher asks students to respond to two questions: Examples of questions that can be asked are the following:

- "What was the main point of today's lecture?"
- "What was the muddiest point?"

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This teaching strategy was initially conjured up by a Physics professor at the University of California, Berkeley, then popularised by Cross and Angelo as one of a wide variety of quick "classroom assessment techniques" (CATs).

The one minute paper improves learning in one of three ways:

1. Firstly it provides the instructor with detailed feedback concerning what students are learning and how well they are learning it—information that is scarce in the typical lecture setting.
2. Secondly, it provides feedback on a regular basis—again, a scarce commodity in a lecture setting.
3. Thirdly, based on the premise that students who have genuine input and control will be better motivated to learn, the one minute paper encourages active engagement in the class process, something typically missing from the lecture environment. 4

The Teaching Intervention

To verify whether my lectures were effective in getting the necessary information across to students I decided to use the "one minute paper". At the end of 4 randomly selected lectures in Land Law and Equity & Trusts I asked students to answer two questions on a piece of paper:

• What was the main point of today's lecture?
• What was the muddiest point?

After each lecture I read the comments and processed the information that I was given. The notes gave me an idea of whether the students had understood what I had covered during the lecture. For points they found unclear I tried to find alternative ways of explaining them for the next lecture. At the beginning of the following lecture I set aside a couple of minutes to go over points that had not been understood by students. I had identified points that had been highlighted by students as muddy areas and listed them on a powerpoint slide for all to see.

Implementing the Teaching Intervention

I was looking forward to using this classroom technique on students. It was a quick, easy and anonymous method for them to show their understanding of the lesson they had just sat through and highlight any difficult points they had come across. The first time I used this technique in a Land Law class just over half the class handed in a piece of paper with answers to the questions I had asked. Most people had correctly identified the main point of the lecture and had identified what points they had not understood in the lecture. The first time I used this technique in the Equity & Trusts class more than half the class participated. Almost all the class correctly identified the main point of the lecture and some people identified areas they had failed to understand. In subsequent lectures of both disciplines I listed points on powerpoint that had not been understood and briefly covered them again in the lecture. I then posted the list on Blackboard so students could have access to it outside the lecture as well.

I repeated this technique another three times for each subject. I generally chose lectures which covered difficult areas. I felt it was important to use the one minute paper for these specific lectures because it would be an ideal way of verifying if the message had got across to the student and if not, which areas I needed to look at again to help facilitate the student's understanding of the subject matter.

I found that students in Equity & Trusts were more on the ball about what was going on in lectures because most of them were correctly identifying the main point of the lecture and not that many people had encountered a muddy point. Land Law students had greater difficult in grasping the main points of the lecture. I found I was taking up 5-10 minutes of the subsequent lecture explaining points that had not been understood during the previous lecture.

On the whole I was happy with this exercise because it gave me an idea of how I was doing with my teaching. It also helped students to briefly reflect on the lesson they had just sat through and write what they had learnt on paper. They were also given the opportunity to make the lecturer aware of any areas they were unsure about and that they would like to be covered again.

I encountered only a couple of problems with this method:

- At first most students participated in the exercise and provided me with useful feedback, but after the second round of lectures the numbers of people participating in this exercise started to dwindle slightly. I had the feeling that some people seemed to feel their brains were too
saturated and just wanted to get out of the classroom as soon as possible and couldn’t be bothered with writing on pieces of paper.

- I found that going over muddiest points in subsequent lectures took up a lot of valuable time that I didn’t have. So in some cases I decided to post the explanation to the identified muddiest points on Blackboard rather than cover them again in lectures.

**Evaluation**

I decided to carry out the evaluation of this teaching cycle through feedback questionnaires that were distributed in lectures at the end of the semester. From a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being *Not very Helpful* and 5 being *Very Helpful* students were required to answer two or more questions on the sheet. Most students who were present in lectures provided me with the necessary feedback.

The questions I put forward were the following:

**Land Law**

Did you find the one minute paper technique helped in your understanding of topics covered in Land Law?

- 68% of students chose 5, 25% of students chose 4, 6% of students chose 3 and 1% of students chose 2, 0% chose 1.

How helpful were the clarification sessions on muddiest points?

- 70% of students chose 5, 24% of students chose 4, 4% of students chose 3 and 2% of students chose 2, 0% chose 1.

**Equity & Trusts**

Did you find the one minute paper technique helped in your understanding of topics covered in Equity and Trusts?

- 65% of students chose 5, 18% of students chose 4, 15% of students chose 3 and 2% of students chose 2, 0% chose 1.

How helpful were the clarification sessions on muddiest points?
68% of students chose 5, 21% of students chose 4, 10% of students chose 3 and 1% of students chose 2, 0% chose 0.

Additional feedback in relation to the one minute note sessions was given to me by students during seminars by word of mouth. Many felt the one-minute note was a great technique because it forced them to reflect and think about the lesson they had listened to. Writing the main point down allowed them to explain their understanding of the lecture in their own words. Verification of whether their understanding of the lecture was correct was later verified by myself in subsequent lectures.

**Conclusion**

On the whole I feel this classroom technique is very useful and a good example of a deep approach to learning. It allows the teacher to be interactive at the end of the lecture in order to verify whether students have learned what he/she set out to explain at the beginning of the lecture. Students are also given a voice in the process to address any concerns or doubts that they have in relation to the lecture. The teacher demonstrates respect for and interest in the student's opinion and encourages the student's active involvement in the learning process.

I will definitely be using this technique again in future teaching because it is a useful process for both myself and the student.