Reflections on Module Design & Critical Reading

When it comes to designing learner-centred courses and modules, there are a few key principles that most educators adhere to. According to Hodges (2012), these are encapsulated in the backwards course design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), where “…course design begins by determining what it is that we really want students to be able to do or feel or think long after the final exam is over. Then we make every other aspect of the course serve those goals.” (pp. 1).

In this issue, in what ways have our authors done this as they conceived and implemented their respective modules? For Dr Maung Maung Saw (Clinical Imaging Research Centre), it was about charting new learning frontiers in his discipline as he explored the feasibility of starting a new interdisciplinary module. (see pp. 2). Meanwhile, when it came to developing a module on Western architectural history for her mostly-Asian students, Dr Lilian Chee (Dept of Architecture) did so by grouping the topics according to themes rather than chronologically, and situating the content within a contemporary Singaporean context (pp. 7). Dr Chee shares her experiences and the challenges she faced. For Ms Chen Hui-Chen (Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies), she challenged her students to cultivate their self-directed learning skills when it came to mastering drug calculations, skills that will stand them in good stead when they graduate (see pp. 12). Meanwhile, to give Masters of Public Health students a more authentic learning experience, Dr Agus Salim and A/P Gerald Koh encouraged them to bring their own datasets for their practical sessions for the Biostatistics module under their charge (pp. 17). While it meant a time-consuming re-design of major portions of the module, the writers relate the positive payoff it had in terms of enhancing their students’ learning and igniting their interest in pursuing the subject further.

We are pleased to also have in this issue colleagues sharing their experiences in cultivating their students’ critical reading skills. A/P Sunita Abraham (Dept of English Language & Literature) outlines various strategies (including active listening incorporating paraphrase) which help students include a rhetoric of critical assent in their critical reading skills (see pp. 22). Meanwhile, for their assignments, Dr Zhang Chun (Dept of Physics) challenged his students to critique papers from top-tiered journals, with the aim of not only cultivating their critical thinking and evaluation skills, but also to imbue in them the courage to critically analyse the content of such papers rather than just absorbing the content without further contemplation.

References: