The First Steps Curriculum

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The First steps curriculum is based on the Oxford Brookes University two-day short course, First Steps into Teaching. This course is intended for PhD students, new lecturers, visiting lecturers from industry, and others who will be taking up teaching and teaching-related responsibilities: leading seminar groups, assisting in laboratories, and so on.

The definition of teaching is sometimes a challenge. What do we mean? I have posted a question in the forum on Supporting Learning:

http://vle.openbrookes.net/mod/forumng/discuss.php?d=7

Where, by the way, there is a great discussion taking place on “learning”. And one about to start on “teaching”.

Resource based learning

In this MOOC the curriculum is realised through a resource-based learning approach, conceived around:

- Dialogue
- Autonomy, and
- Open Educational Resources.

When I say “dialogue” I mean two things.

Talking together, of course. We learn from each other, in conversation. This is related to the concept of autonomous learning. Learning is not just being told something, it involves questioning and reflecting back on things: having a conversation with the ideas themselves.

But, I also mean “dialogic” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogic) in a wider sense, as attributed to Bakhtin (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakhtin). As Bakhtin put it:

> verbal discourse is a social phenomenon - social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image [i.e. phonology, accent, etc] to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning. (Bakhtin 1981: 269)

Learning resources are texts. And, all texts, this one, our learning designs, songs, articles, novels, QA reports, essays, and poems are in dialogue more or less directly with texts - and even to wholeness of language - that has come before.

By “autonomy” I mean individual agency and responsibility. And, of course this can be read
simply as taking responsibility for one’s own learning and encouraging our students to do the
same. But like dialogue, agency is also a complex concept. We act in communities (with
institutions) where there are rules and roles that circumscribe our action. You might want to
see Engestrom (1999) on this. As teachers we inhabit and act a role. As do students. Can we
get beyond the roles as set out in our communities?

Finally, our approach is conceived around open educational resources (OER). And I say this
without capital letters. There are more - and less - strict interpretations of what open educational
resources are. We will explore this in our live online session on 23 May, and the question really
runs deep through this course. Because, to me, resource-based approaches (RBL) to learning
are problematic. And, of course, openness is also a challenging issue.

First steps curriculum
But, back to the Curriculum

There are six topics:
1. Supporting learning (Week 0)
2. Reflective practice (Week 1)
3. Teaching groups (Week 2)
4. Feedback (Week 3)
5. Lecturing (Week 4)
6. Evaluation (Week 5)

Although realised slightly differently one to another, in concept each topic is structured around
three main components.

- A multimedia introduction to the topic with transcript
- A wiki seeded with resources relevant to the topic
- A discussion forum.

You may choose to engage with all these topics or only some of them.

The idea is that you should listen to, or watch the intro, browse the resources, reading more
deeply those that interest you, add others to the wiki, which you might wish to, which are
relevant to the topic, which you can license for use, and engage in the discussion about the
topic.

In the live discussion on Wednesday 23 May at 1500 BST, we will be considering open
educational resources (OER) and the wider concept of open academic practice. We will touch
lightly on the topic of intellectual property rights in OER and the idea of repositories.

So, dive into the curriculum and make it yours.
References
