

Reflection Report

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1. CBC, CBE, and CBA as a System

CBC (Competency-Based Curriculum) focuses on students acquiring and mastering specific skills or competencies before moving on to the next level. It means that students gain deep understanding and proficiency in a subject, rather than just moving on after a certain amount of time. Accordingly, CBC takes into account learner's educational needs and peculiarities. CBE (Competency-Based Education) is the approach or system that aligns with CBC. In CBE, students progress through their education by demonstrating mastery of the required competencies at their own pace. The focus is on learning outcomes rather than seat time. CBA (Competency-Based Assessment) refers to the ways students' competencies are measured. It involves assessing students' knowledge, skills, and abilities through practical tasks, projects, or tests that show whether they have mastered the required competencies. These 3 concepts are constructively aligned. CBC sets the learning goals, CBE is the system that is used to ensure that students meet those goals, and CBA is the method of assessing whether they have successfully achieved them. Together, they create a personalized learning experience where students move forward as they demonstrate mastery. As I am an English teacher-trainer, I can give one example of the competency-based approach which I observed. The lesson was English for 9th Grade students. The students were given a task to acquire new vocabulary on "Environmental protection" and use them to make up sentences. The ones who have completed this task were asked to write down an essay about this topic. The more able students could move to writing an essay, but the less able students spent majority part of the

lesson on making sentences using new vocabulary. Of course, it was difficult for the teacher to assess their work and it didn't align well with the CBA approach. It created confusion and inconsistency in how progress was measured.

2. Curriculum Development and Learning Goals

In the CBC (Competency-Based Curriculum) context, high-quality learning goals, activities and assessments can be defined as to be directed to achieve the constructive alignment. Learning goals can be considered of high quality when it meets the SMART abbreviation denoting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bounded. I would like to give an example from an English lesson: "Up to the end of the lesson, students will be able to learn 10 new words on "Environmental protection" and apply them in dialogues". This learning goal is also aligned, since the teacher does not set the learning goal just to memorise, but focuses on the practical application of the new words in dialogues (or we can vary a task to a discussion / debate; it depends on the level of students). Also learning goals should be challenging but attainable, which denotes that goals should push students and improve their critical and creative thinking skills. In our case, students will be pushed to join discussions/debates (at least to make up a dialogue and act it out). Learning activities are considered of high quality when they are engaging and active. Activities should involve students in hands-on, real-world tasks that encourage active learning. This could include collaborative work, project-based learning, or problem-solving tasks. In addition, learning activities should be varied and adaptive, since students are different with different preferable learning needs and accordingly activities should be diverse (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and flexible to meet students' unique learning needs. Moreover, learning activities should be purposeful to master the competencies outlined in the learning goals. Assessments are recognised of high quality when they meet the set criteria. Students should understand the criteria by which they are being assessed, allowing them to track their own progress and focus their efforts. Also, the assessments should be authentic and performance-based as they assess how students apply their learning outside the classroom. So in spite of giving traditional tests, assessments could include projects, presentations, or other real-world tasks. I would like to share with the English lesson from the Unit "Environmental Protection" that I observed. Students were tasked to design a project on "Save the Aral Sea". Students worked in 3 mini-groups and did their research. Strong points: - Learner engagement. - Creativity and personal expression. To be improved: - Assessment and feedback process. - Lack of scaffolding.

3. Assessment Quality: Validity, Reliability, and Fairness

Recently I was in the team responsible for creating examination tests on English for secondary schools of Kazakhstan. Test items covered main language skills of school students such as Use of English (English Grammar) and Reading. Majority of the test items were multiple-choice tests designed to assess students' understanding of the curriculum. Valid aspects: - Validity of Content: Test items were aligned with the content of the curriculum. Also test items met the learning objectives set in the English curriculum. - Validity of Construct: Test items also assessed learner's reading skills where they should read a text on the topic and solve the following tasks. Moreover, test items were created to check grammar skills of students: how they can apply certain grammar rules (theoretical knowledge) in practice. Invalid aspects: - Length of texts: Some texts were too long for students who require more time for reading and processing information. - Cultural bias: Some of the texts given could be more familiar for some students, while other students may find them difficult to understand in terms of cultural understanding and acquisition. Was scoring consistent? I think, yes! Since multiple-choice format of test items made the scoring system consistent: if a learner chooses the right answer, he/she gets 1 point. Concerning consideration of fairness and student diversity, I would like to mention that the test didn't cover students' specific educational needs like students with learning disabilities (eyesight problems, hearing impairment, etc.).

4. Grading and Standard Setting

In my teaching context (I am an English teacher-trainer: I am responsible for in-service training of 2 week courses of English teachers of my region), the course participants (English teachers) are graded according to 5 assessment criteria (attending sessions; active participation in different stages of the sessions; engagement with other students in the groups; quick responses/reactions to the questions; suggesting new ideas/decisions of problems). Maximum number of scores for each criteria is 10. Accordingly, if a course participant meets all the mentioned above criteria, he/she gets maximum 50 scores which is clear and fair. In addition, at the completion of the 2-week course, the course participants take an exam (multiple-choice tests) where they are tested by 24 test items (Some of the test items are assessed by 1 score; some of them – by 2 or more scores; it depends on the complexity of the questions / test items as some questions might be for matching several questions with several answers, so such test items are assessed by 2 or more scores). The content of the test items / questions is based on the content of the course programme which demonstrates that this assessment is aligned with the learning goals. Maximum number of scores they receive will be 50 as well. So totally the course participants get 100 maximum. How are cut-off scores set: the course participants will be certified (will get their certificates of successful completion of the in-service training programme) if they get at least 50 scores (which is the part of the total amount; the cut-off score). I think, this is fair since the course participants are certified if they acquire the half of

the whole programme. Improvement areas: - Diversity of Assessments: To ensure that grading fully reflects students' understanding, incorporating a greater diversity of assessments, such as project-based learning, essays, and open-ended questions, would better assess critical thinking and application skills. These types of assessments can more accurately measure higher-order cognitive skills compared to test exams.

5. Use of Rubrics

As an educator teaching English teachers of secondary schools I use rubrics for assignments where students often create work that requires a detailed and subjective evaluation like essays, presentations, or lesson plans. I would like to share with an example of the rubrics for short-term lesson plans of English teachers: Goals: Do lesson goals meet the learning goals? Are lesson goals SMART? Active learning strategies: Does the lesson include strategies that engage students, like group discussions, interactive activities, or multimedia? Differentiation: How is differentiation implemented? Are students with different educational needs (visuals, auditory, kinesthetic) catered in the short-term lesson plan? Assessment methods: Does the short-term lesson plan include appropriate formative or summative assessments? This rubric helped me to assess both learning and teaching of course participants: how they understand key concepts of the course programme, how they choose methods taking into account age preferences of learners, how they can reflect on their microteaching sessions (since the course participants deliver microteaching sessions using these lesson plans). Key success factors for good rubric design and implementation in my opinion are: - Constructive alignment of learning, teaching and assessment; - Consistency and transparency of assessment tools and methods, assessment criteria and rubrics, descriptors; - Constructive feedback from peers (colleagues) and trainer (the main goal of the constructive feedback is to improve learning and teaching); - Self-assessment of teachers (they reflect on microteaching).

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