MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

H. (CLOUD) HENG
https://www.cloudhheng.com

Having grown up in a low-income family with a high number of dependents, I have been challenging myself to transform and bring a better life to my family. However, earning a university degree seemed to be a wild dream for me. Similar to many people who were not born with privileges in wealth or social status, I intended to give up pursuing education considering my family was financially unstable. Moreover, having poor performances at the early stage of my high school further demotivated me to embrace education. My life started to change after meeting a few high-school teachers who were enthusiastic in teaching and supportive for students' futures. As they went the extra mile, I surprisingly discovered my strength in science, of which I was not aware before. Understanding my interest in science, I passed my high school with high distinction, which then allowed me to continue my post-secondary education in Mechanical Engineering with a full scholarship. This significant transition of mine, despite my family background, allowed me to realize how vital education is in helping the vulnerable groups and their families escape from poverty. I envision teachers as candles who consume themselves to light the way for others. After realizing such powerful impacts of education, I also aspired to be a candle that would light up more people through the power of education, just like how I was transformed. Ever since, I have been deriving effective teaching approaches that could benefit the general public while matching my personality. Emerging from my past life experiences as a vulnerable student and learning from my previous well-respected educators, I identify my three core principles in teaching, which retain my motivation in providing engineering education to people, as follows:

1) Encounter Difficulties with Passion

Teaching is not just a profession; it is a passion! Engineering is a complex subject, at times with a high dropout rate, so facing challenges in studying engineering is unavoidable. Nevertheless, the difficulties students encounter are my reason to cultivate my passion in teaching, a strength of mine that was observed from my microteaching training. With my enthusiasm, I aim to progressively build strong interests among my students in engineering studies as I believe if my students can be influenced to be as passionate as me, they would learn to embrace those challenges. Hence, I take extra steps in introducing additional topics beyond students' syllabi that can cultivate their interest in engineering such as social impacts of engineering studies in their personal lives, software skills in simplifying engineering solutions, or engineering career prospects. Including these additional topics undoubtedly requires a significant portion of time, and some may argue that it is pointless to spend time in topics outside of students' syllabi. On the contrary, I consider this work as an investment of time, which can only be made with passion. By putting additional effort in establishing students' engineering interests, even if it is beyond the scope of their studies, students can identify more meaningful purposes to learn engineering. As a result, they are expected to learn their syllabi faster as they appreciate engineering studies better.

To further demonstrate my teaching passion, I aim to establish more effective engagement in classroom settings that involve most young students. I intend to empower young students and help them discover the power of youth; in particular, their abilities to view things from different angles, introduce fresh ideas, and incorporate creativity. With this empowerment, young students would see themselves as valuable assets in various organizations without tagging themselves as "the least experienced group".

2) Embrace Diversification in Teaching and Learning

It is recognized that students come from different backgrounds and have unique characteristics, so there is no single method that is sufficiently effective for everyone. Understanding that each person is unique, I enjoy spending time to research students' individual characteristics in order to advise the most effective strategies for different students to master a particular subject. Instead of imposing a

single study guide for all students, I tend to help my students to discover their unique learning strategies that suit them best based on their distinct personalities.

Understanding learning preferences of students vary, which is often affected by student's diverse backgrounds and cultures, it is crucial for me to diversify my teaching strategies. Students who tend to learn by hands-on experience would probably not appreciate plain direct instructions. Likewise, visual learners would likely not find it helpful to learn with pure spoken instructions without any visual aids. Therefore, it is essential for me to create lesson plans that include a wide range of teaching methods to accommodate various learning preferences. For these reasons, I aim to use well-balanced spoken and written instructions while introducing engineering concepts for the benefit of both visual and auditory learners. Following this, I like to discuss problem sets that are associated to the theories taught to help students further appreciate what the learn. In laboratory courses, I enjoy using experiential instructions to accommodate kinesthetic learners by demonstrating relevant lab equipment. I also realize engineering theories are closely related to daily life applications, so teaching engineering is a great platform for me to illustrate the relevance of classroom content in our life. Using my apprenticeship teaching perspective, I usually include participatory learning activities, such as case studies, so that students can learn under interactive instructions through interactive discussions. A variety of instructions and classroom activities would certainty lead to effective classroom engagement, which enhances teacher-student and student-student communication. With strong classroom engagement, it also helps me encourage questions and listen to ideas openly, which further promote my flexibility and diversification in teaching.

3) Seek Opportunities for Improvements

Teaching is a continuous process, so it is my commitment to seek feedback and act accordingly. I envision evaluation as a key element to measure my teaching effectiveness and my students' learning success, so it is my practice to encourage students to participate in evaluations to support my continuous improvement goals. While end-of-term evaluation is helpful to examine my performance, it is also necessary for me to conduct routine mini-evaluations throughout the term so that early actions can be taken to fix any identified problems before the end of the term. Besides evaluations, I also embrace teaching reflections that encourage transformation. For instance, my teaching reflections have changed my main objective in academic assessment from differentiating students' performances to providing learning opportunities for students, and therefore I started to adopt formative assessment, which allows me to focus more on providing constructive feedback.

I value continuing education, so regular enrollments in professional development courses are crucial to support my lifelong learning goals and enhance my credibility as an educator. These courses are also platforms to connect myself with more educators who share a similar teaching of passion. Hence, there would be more opportunities for me to engage in constructive discussions and exchanges of idea about successful teaching and learning, which are strong references for me to guide my next action plans.

Closing Remark

I believe successful people do not just focus on personal success; they help others succeed as well. Hence, my life will be more meaningful if I can continue to be a candle who utilizes education to light up hope for more people who are hungry for knowledge. It is my vision that education is treated as a human right, instead of a privilege, where everyone can be given basic education regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability status, or socioeconomical status. When I transform people's lives through education, these people could also spread the light to others one day and contribute to their societies and countries. With this inspiring mission, changing the world into a better place to live, under the shadow of education, would certainly be possible!