

DISCUSSION PAPER IV

Effective Teaching of the History of Democratic Kampuchea

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As stated in the Teacher's Guidebook: The Teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)" (2009), "the rationale for teaching the history of Democratic Kampuchea is to promote healing, justice, reconciliation and democracy in Cambodia." The objectives for teachers are "to engage the intellectual curiosity of the student and to inspire critical thought and personal growth." Therefore, teachers must consider lessons and instructional strategies that will develop critical thinking skills and promote active learning in students.

Thinking About the History of Democratic Kampuchea Curriculum

The pedagogy for teaching the history of Democratic Kampuchea (or any history for that matter) should emphasize on how to "teach history," how to construct historical narratives and arguments and how to teach students more explicitly and more systematically. Teachers teaching history need to be exposed to differing perspectives and research methods. They also need to discuss the thinking behind the lessons, the purposes, and the strategies that promote effective teaching.

Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Teaching critical thinking skills is very important in today's world. Students need to be curious and open-minded. They need to ask questions, define a problem, identify and analyze assumptions and biases, examine evidence, and be able to look at different points of view in order to make sound judgment/decisions about historical, social, personal and civic matters. If students are able to think critically, then they are apt to process the information, problem solve and make sound decisions in life.

Promoting Active Learning

Active learning is a process whereby students engage in high-order thinking tasks such as analysis, evaluation and creation. Cooperative learning, researching, presenting, interviewing, and role playing are some approaches that promote active learning and high-order thinking skills.

Teachers need to move from traditional teacher-centered classroom (lecture method) to a student-centered classroom (active learning method), where teachers provide opportunities for students to be more responsive towards their own learning. In such a classroom, teachers encourage students to do more than just listen and be passive learners. Students are required to read, write, discuss, ask questions, research and be engaged in learning new content and in solving problems.

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom led a group of educational psychologists in developing a classification of intellectual levels that are important in learning. Bloom found that most teachers require students to think only at the lowest possible level - the recall of information. At this level, students only listen, memorize and recite facts, which do not require them to think, wonder, imagine, ask questions or problem solve.

Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain, from the simple recall or recognition of facts (lowest level) through applying, analyzing and evaluating (more complex and abstract mental levels), to creating (highest level). The action verbs that represent intellectual activity on each level are described in the Bloom's Taxonomy Chart.

Bloom's Taxonomy Chart

Creating: can the student create new product or point of view?	Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things	designing, constructing, planning, producing, inventing, creating, developing
Evaluating: can the student justify a stand or decision?	Justifying a decision or course of action	checking, hypothesizing, critiquing, experimenting, judging, evaluating, supporting
Analyzing: can the student distinguish between the different parts?	Breaking information into parts to explore understandings and relationships	comparing, contrasting, organizing, experimenting, deconstructing, examining, interrogating, finding,
Applying: can the student use the information in a new way?	Using information in another familiar situation	implementing, employing, using, executing, solving, operating, demonstrating, interpreting, writing
Understanding: can the student explain ideas or concepts?	Explaining ideas or concepts	interpreting, describing, summarizing, discussing, paraphrasing, classifying, explaining, identifying, locating,
Remembering: can the student recall or remember the information?	Recalling information	recognizing, listing, retrieving, naming, recalling, repeating, duplicating, defining

Through the Documentation Center of Cambodia's (DC-Cam) Genocide Education Project, teachers are encouraged to use student-centered strategies to teach about the history of Democratic Kampuchea and to nurture students' literacy and critical thinking skills within a respectful classroom climate. One of the most effective strategies for teaching the history of Democratic Kampuchea is Socratic instruction (questioning). Socratic instruction fosters critical thinking, evaluation, and knowledge application in students and should be used as frequently as possible in class discussions and in assignments. Teachers should:

- Give students time to consider the question and their response before requesting them to answer.

- Avoid yes-no questions that do not promote thinking or discussion.
- Be sure students have the needed background and resources to respond to the questions posed.
- Ask open-ended questions to promote critical thinking.
- Use clarifying questions and statements to guide students as they sift through possible answers.
- Use questions from all levels of thinking to develop higher levels of critical thinking as well as the typical knowledge and comprehension levels of students.

Below are additional instructional strategies to help develop critical thinking skills and promote active learning.

Instructional Strategies

Strategies	Descriptions
K-W-L	This strategy is used to find out what the students know before a lesson, what they want to know during a lesson, and ultimately what they have learned after a unit or a lesson. K-W-L can be used to engage students in a new topic, activate prior knowledge, share unit objectives, and monitor learning.
Brainstorming	A learning event in which a group of learners spontaneously contribute ideas.
Think-Pair-Share	Students think individually, then pair (discuss with partner), then share ideas with class. This discussion technique gives students the opportunity to respond thoughtfully to questions in written form and to engage in meaningful dialogues with other students around the topic.
Venn Diagram	A graphic organizer used to help students organize information by comparing and contrasting.
Guided Discussions	Classroom discussions typically begin with the teacher describing the goal or purpose of the discussion. Sometimes discussions may be initiated by the posing of an open-ended question to help students make interpretations.
Guided Questioning	A scaffolding technique in which the teacher's questions start out with many clues about what is happening in the reading, and then as comprehension improves, the questions become

	less supportive.
Guided Reading	Structured reading where short passages are read, then student interpretations are immediately recorded, discussed, and revised.
Summarizing	Deciding what is most important in a text and putting it in one's own words.
Visuals	A great variety of illustrative materials such as visual slides, films, models, photos, maps, posters, and books used for clarifying and improving understanding, learning or appreciation.
Role Playing	Acting out a role (possibly a role that one would not normally occupy), as part of a learning session directed towards understanding a role or a situation. Planning and performing plays in the classroom can improve reading and performance skills and help to motivate learners who benefit from social interactions and hands-on aspects of role playing.
Survival Box	This strategy tests high-level thinking and coping skills. It allows students to problem solve and use their survival skills.
Mapping	Mapping information helps students analyze, organize, and present information more effectively.
Timeline	This strategy helps students understand and remember the chronology of events.
Diary/Journal Writing	This type of writing is often used to encourage reflection or exploration of ideas of interest to the students.
Poetry Writing	Poetry encourages students to express ideas in imaginative and highly connected ways.
Interview	One way to help students gather information is to have them conduct interviews. The process of interviewing gives students more ownership of knowledge, especially if they are generating their own interview questions and are accountable for presenting the information to the class.
Guest Speaker	Guest speakers come into the classroom to share specialized knowledge and experience. Guest speakers help to form connections between knowledge acquired in the classroom and real-world applications.
Cooperative Group	Students break into small groups to problem-solve, collaborate, share and delegate responsibilities, practice and communicate with others of varying abilities. The responsibilities for each group member include: facilitator/leader, note taker/recorder, time keeper, and motivator.
Presentation	Students explain, show or demonstrate the content of their

	learning to an audience.
Films	Motion pictures can be used to enhance learning of literature, language, or historical events.
Brochure	This activity provides an opportunity for students to focus on a purpose and an audience. Students have to take a stand, determine what information they want to share or leave out, and the processes they follow to complete the task. The brochure incorporates visual elements as part of the informative communication.
Essay	A short, written work, centered on a single subject.
Research	An activity in which learners investigate or collect information about a particular subject.
Comparative Study	A research methodology that aims to make comparisons across different subjects such as countries or cultures. Comparative study is basically the act of comparing two or more things with a view to discovering something about one or all of the things being compared.
Review	To reexamine the learning that occurred during a unit of study.
Jigsaw	Pieces or topics of study that are researched and learned by students within groups and then put together in the form of peer teaching between groups.
Letter Writing	A writing activity that encourages students to think about a specific audience.
Field Trip	An activity that occurs outside the classroom for the purpose of expanding student learning and of providing hands-on experience with objects or people.
Assessment	An evaluation designed to assess/measure students understanding of content or their ability to perform a skill or set of skills.

Use of active learning techniques in the classroom is vital because of their powerful impact on student learning. Therefore, a thoughtful approach to skillful/effective teaching requires that teachers become knowledgeable about various instructional strategies listed above and in the *Teacher's Guidebook* to develop critical thinking skills and promote active learning. Further, each teacher should engage in self-reflection, exploring his or her personal willingness to implement various instructional strategies in his/her teaching of the history of Democratic Kampuchea.

Student Learning

An enormous amount has been written in the last two decades about research on how people learn. The National Research Council's 2000 publication, How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School, presented the following points:

1. Research shows clearly that a person must be engaged to learn. People learn by actively participating in observing, speaking, writing, listening, thinking, drawing, and doing.
2. Learning is enhanced when a person sees potential implications, applications, and benefits to others.
3. Learning builds on current understanding.

Effective Teaching

Based on the National Research Council's 2000 publication, How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School, effective teaching means actively engaging students. Thus, teachers need to specify clear lesson objectives, teach directly to those objectives, make learning as concrete and meaningful as possible, and provide relevant guided practice and independent practice activities that focus on:

Interest and explanation	Good teaching arouses interest in learning. It helps students feel that they can in some way own it and use it to make sense of the world around them. Coupled with the need to establish the relevance of content, teachers need to craft explanations that enable students to understand the material. This involves knowing what students understand and then forging connections between what is known and what is new.
Concern and respect for students and student learning	Good teaching involves in making things easy for students to learn. It always tries to help students feel that a subject can be mastered; it encourages them to try things out for themselves and succeed at something quickly.

Appropriate assessment and feedback	Good teaching involves using a variety of assessment techniques and allowing students to demonstrate their mastery of the material in different ways.
Clear goals and intellectual challenge	Good teaching sets high standards for students. They also articulate clear goals. Students should know up front what they will learn and what they will be expected to do with what they know.
Independence, control and active engagement	Good teaching fosters a sense of student control over learning and interest in the subject matter. Good teachers create learning tasks appropriate to the student's level of understanding.
Learning from students	Good teaching is open to change. It involves constantly trying to modify instruction to address the learning needs of students.

Teachers need to create an environment that inspires the students' imagination, directs their intellect, and fosters productive learning outcomes on the subject. They also need to establish a regular classroom routine and be prepared with content knowledge and lesson plans to implement effectively every day.

There is no single right way to begin a class. However, taking a moment to ponder a topic, read a short passage, or think about an issue will help to focus the class on the lesson.

A short story is often a good way to generate an interest, a sense of empathy for a group of people, or to understand the effects of a profound event. It can also get the collective imaginations going. Having the students draw an illustration of a scene from a book the class is reading or an event from history can be an effective way to focus their attention on the lesson.

Once the teacher has captured the student's curiosity, he or she must direct it towards the lesson. Engaging student curiosity at the beginning of the class and then drawing that curiosity into the lesson are the first necessary steps to delivering

an effective lesson every day. It should connect to the content or to a skill necessary to participate in the lesson.

The seven principles of good practices below are guidelines for teachers and students to improve teaching and learning in all disciplines, not just in the history class. These principles work for many different kinds of students from various backgrounds – male, female, rich, poor, older, younger, well-prepared and underprepared.

Seven Principles of Good Practice

1. Contact	Teacher encourages students to have contact with him/her frequently as a way to motivate and involve students.
2. Cooperation	Teacher develops cooperation among students as a way to sharpen their thinking and deepen their understanding.
3. Active Learning	Teacher encourages active learning as a way to get students to talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives.
4. Feedback	Teacher gives prompt feedback as a way to assess students' existing knowledge and competence, and to let them know what they've learned and what they still need to learn.
5. Time on Task	Teacher emphasizes time on task as way to allocate realistic amounts of time and to manage effective learning for students.
6. Expectations	Teacher communicates high expectations as a way to build excellence in education for all students.
7. Learning Styles	Teacher respects diverse talents and ways of learning as a way to highlight different talents and styles of learning in class.

When high expectations, responsibilities, activities, interactions, cooperation, and diversity are incorporated, the effects of learning multiply. When active learning and critical thinking skills are utilized, students learn more, think more, interact more and respond more to the historical, social, personal, and civic issues that impact their daily life.

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