CHAPTER ONE

Approach to Teaching in Higher Education

> *Teaching is not a simple matter that can be expressed in a set of rules applicable to all circumstances. Rather, it has to be approached in terms of a set of principles to be applied in a manner appropriate to circumstances*
>
> (Yorke, 2012)

Imagine you have to teach a course that introduces and describes different moral theories where the aim is for students to understand the various perspectives in ethics that inform the points of views of individuals and groups on what is considered moral behaviour. How do

you approach the teaching of an abstract set of ideas in moral philosophy to students in a manner that they can comprehend, recognize and appreciate in their context such as in applying it to the moral education classroom with a diversity of students that they will have to teach once they graduate? What approach should instructors approach in this course to be able to achieve a good understanding that contributes to their development as future moral education teachers? Or any other subject-matter teacher for that matter! Further, how do you relate dry theoretical content to real-life and its complexity so that learners are ready for the not so straightforward world, and the issues that reside in the problems that come with it?
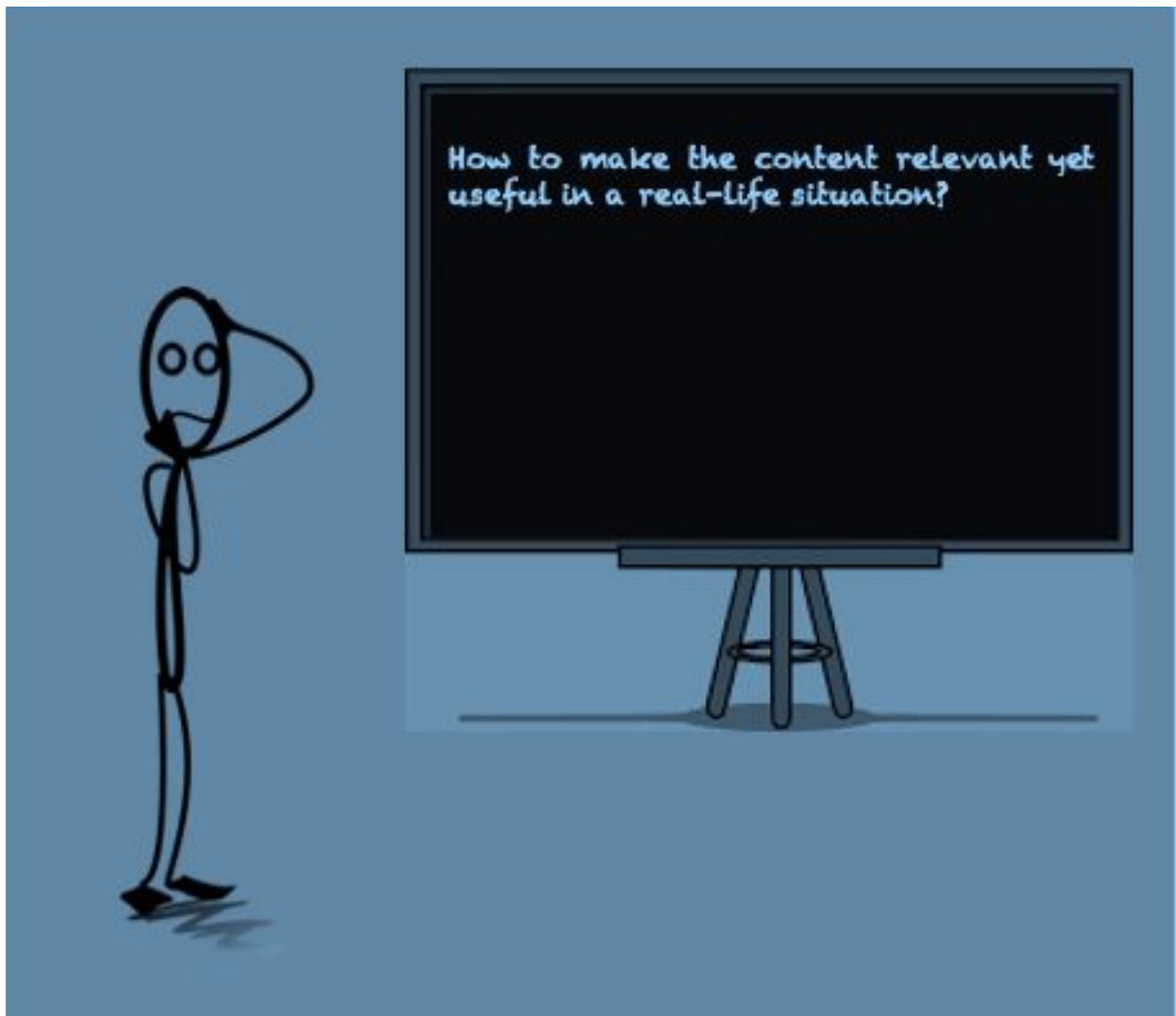

Figure 2. Making Learning Relevant to Real-life Situation

Philosophy of Teaching in HE in the 21st-Century

Teaching and learning in higher education is changing. According to Siemens (2005), learning has to move beyond making concrete connections to content to a more interactive connection so that the learner can appreciate the relationship of the content to all aspects of their life. COVID-19 pandemic raised the profile of distance learning. The IAU Global Survey on Covid-19 impact on higher education (Marinoni et al., 2020) suggests that more flexible approaches to teaching and learning are needed beyond COVID-19. Essentially, the philosophy of teaching in higher education is about adopting approaches that provide opportunities to be adapted to the uncertain challenges. Instructors need approaches that lend themselves easily to blended or hybrid learning, allowing for a mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning without affecting the learners and their learning process. At the same time, approaches chosen should allow for learning to take place within the reality of the times through close relationship between student and teacher.

Within this philosophical framework, teaching should be student-centered. However, studies have shown that an approach that combines student-centered and teacher-centered approaches with educational planning and consideration of the previous readiness of students can make the difference in the outcomes (Shirani Bidabadi et al., 2016). Thus, a learner-centered approach that provides a combination of the two focuses, together with adequate background preparation by teachers, offers a better overall approach to teaching in higher education. While we strive to keep abreast of the evolving situation, and its impact on teaching and learning in higher education, the best practices are still relevant to guide how teaching should be approached in higher education. What is important is for instructors to find approaches that can be easily adopted and adapted for the needs of their learners and the course.

Figure 3. Teaching in HE in the 21st Century

Teaching in HE as Promoting Authentic Learning

Transforming learning is not only a social and economic need but a moral imperative. As an instructor, we have a responsibility for their well-being through the kind of learning that occurs. Ultimately then, teaching in higher education should contribute to authentic learning. Authentic learning is learning that occurs through learners addressing real-world, complex problems and their solutions, using role-playing exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of practice (Lombardi & Oblinger, 2007). It allows students to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts that involve real-world problems and projects that are relevant to the learner (Donovan et al., 1999)). According to Lombardi and Oblinger (2007), authentic learning has been identified as consisting of ten design elements. As she suggests, these elements can be used as a checklist to identify approaches that offer authentic learning.
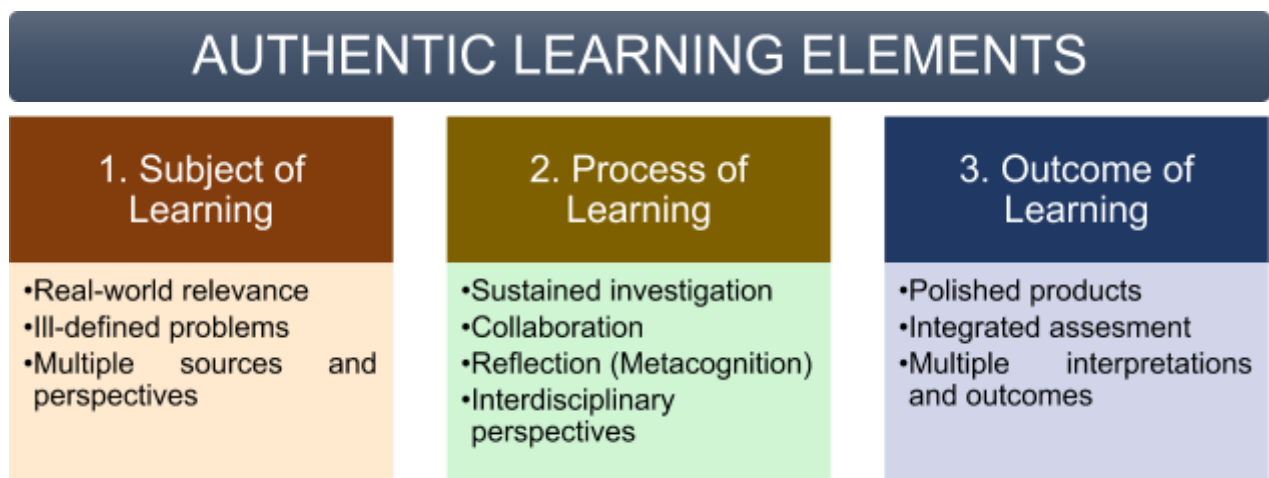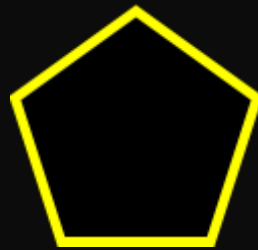
AUTHENTIC LEARNING ELEMENTS

1. Subject of Learning
- Real-world relevance
- Ill-defined problems
- Multiple sources and perspectives

2. Process of Learning
- Sustained investigation
- Collaboration
- Reflection (Metacognition)
- Interdisciplinary perspectives

3. Outcome of Learning
- Polished products
- Integrated assesment
- Multiple interpretations and outcomes

Figure 4. Authentic Learning for the 21st Century (Lombardi, 2007)

CHAPTER TWO

PBL as An Authentic Learning Approach in Teaching Humanities and Social Sciences

Imagine you have to teach a course that should draw students into the problem behind its inclusion in the programme, while being able to motivate them to act on the knowledge they gain from it in their professional lives while contributing to their personal development as

human beings. How should you approach the teaching of this course so that it allows you, learners, to engage effectively with the content while making a difference to their worldview? What approach should instructors adopt in this course to be able to achieve effective engagement with the content matter while allowing for collaborative meaning-making yet situated in real-life situations? How can you allow for authentic learning?
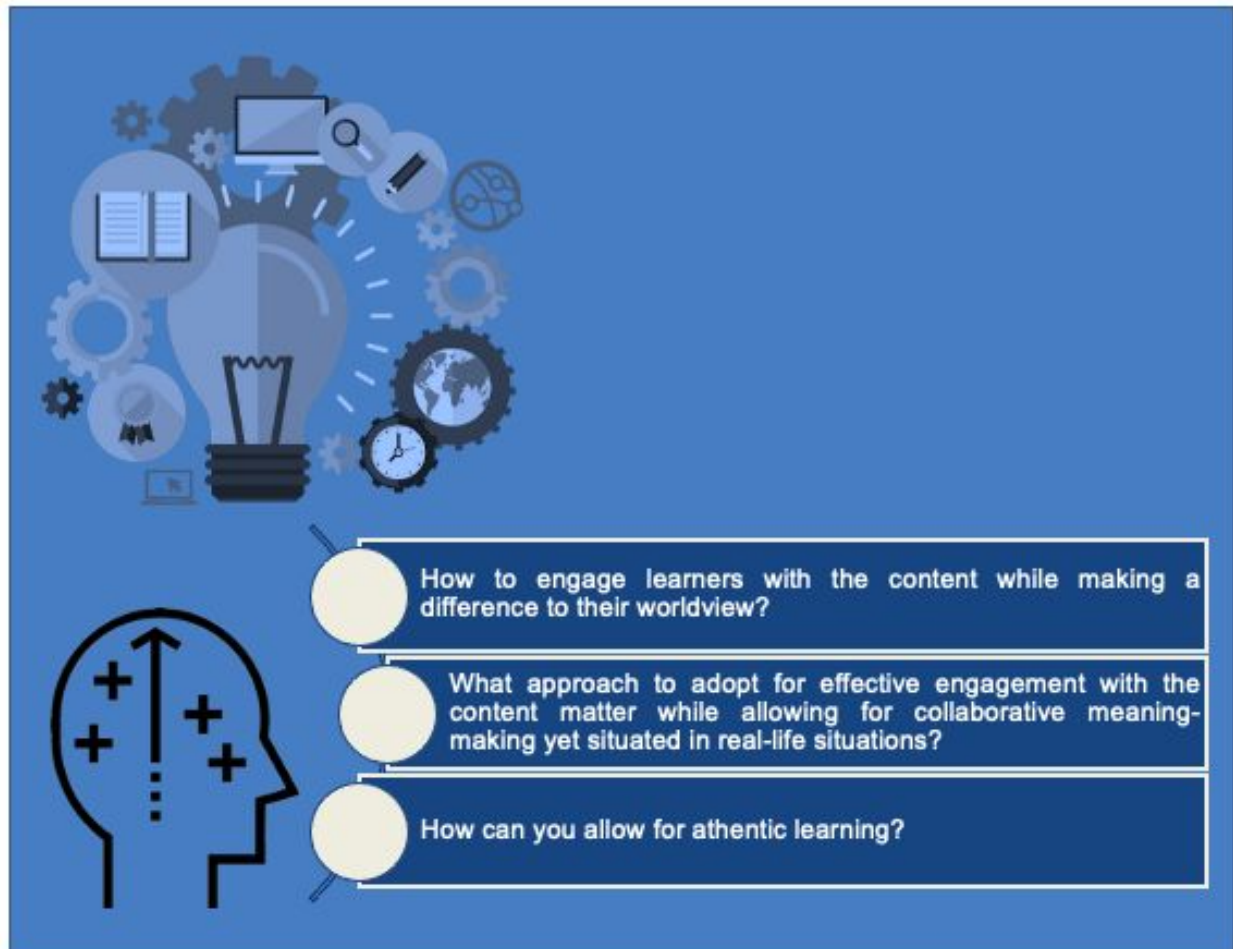

Figure 5. PBL as an Authentic Learning Approach

PBL Approaches in Teaching Humanities and Social Sciences

PBL in teaching humanities-based courses refers to using the fundamental principles of PBL as a teaching approach in teaching humanities and social science-based courses. This is done by situating the particular content matter studied in real-world problems and using the real world as the "vehicle" to promote student learning of the concepts and principles involved in the study of the subject matter and issues related to the problem. The instructor adopts the principles of the PBL approach and adapts it to the teaching of the subject matter. As human culture is complex and multi-layered, using real-world problems allows the instructor to engage students with the different concepts, ideas, and issues contained in these courses by motivating them to explore and address the problem based on the knowledge, skills, and values they learn while doing the project. Thus an important aspect of using PBL is providing the proper scaffolding such as in the form of questions to help students focus and engage adequately, with content towards finding a way forward beyond the problem.
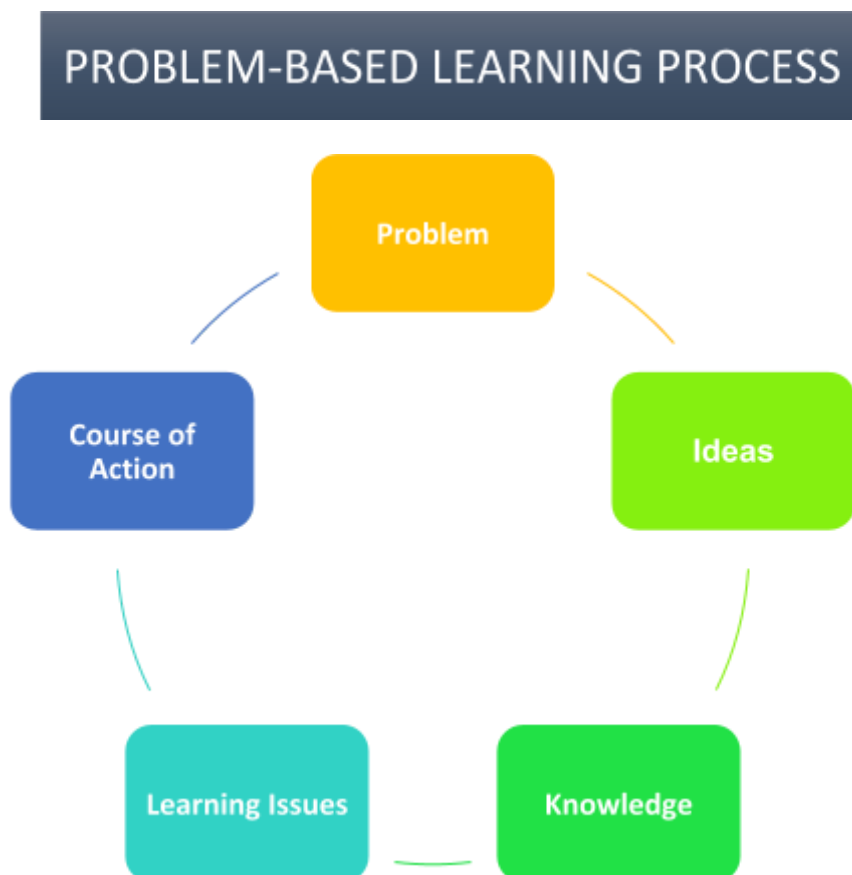

Figure 6. Problem Based Learning Process

PBL in Teaching Humanities and Social Sciences

According to Lombardi and Oblinger (2007), authentic learning practices should "bring the focus back on the learner" and help the instructor to improve the way they "absorb, retain, and transfer knowledge" (p.4). PBL does this by allowing the instructor to identify a problem within the discipline and the subject matter under study. It allows for a variety of authentic-based learning practices such as inquiry-based learning to be used to stimulate thinking, motivates research, and to situate themselves as a community of learners to make a difference-however small or big that maybe! Essentially PBL allows for authentic problem solving as a real-world problem can be used to develop relevant knowledge, skills, and values useful both to professional and personal lives of students as learners.
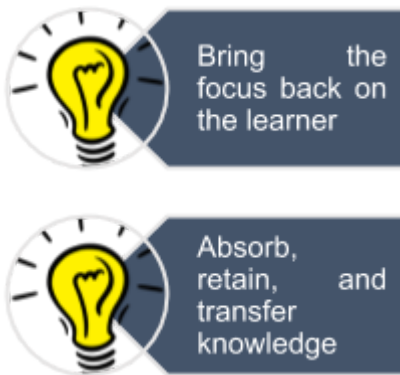
Figure 7. PBL in Teaching Humanities and Social Sciences