

**Experience Sharing by Liberal Studies Teachers**  
**Seed Project - Curriculum Leadership and School-based Curriculum Planning**  
*“Never save the best for the last moment as  
there will always be something better”*

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Betty was a hardworking teacher with a strong passion for teaching. She put in lot of efforts in the betterment of the teaching of NSS Liberal Studies by attending workshops and seminars organized by the Education Bureau. In one of our earlier Panel meetings, she was assigned a duty to set one of the mid-term examination questions which touched on public health issues.

She read of lot of different resources, like recent news cuts from various websites. She then identified the essential key concepts and drafted the questions with clear assessment objectives. Several drafts were done until she could convince herself it was perfectly written. Though the process was time and effort consuming, she found it rewarding and meaning both to her and the students. I knew that she was very satisfied with her work which I never doubt the quality. She was just like a top student who always target at 100 marks.

To her surprise, the performance of students on the question she set was very poor. During the evaluation meeting with me and other Liberal Studies teachers, she gave a detailed report of students' strengths and weaknesses. She did not blame the students. And she planned to hold a post-mortem discussion for students to learn from mistakes. We discovered that most students were not able to answer the "which is the most important"- type question. We agreed to organize this post mortem examination on a Saturday morning. Betty was praised by other colleagues for her efforts in the discussion. Yet, she was unhappy. She talked to me and as a panel head I did not know what to do other than giving some spiritual support. "Don't give up yet. I know you are hard working. *The students won't blame you!* Cheer up!"

On the day of the post mortem discussion with the students, she was competent to give a detailed analysis of the examination performance. She explained the skills and essential concepts required for her question, and helped the students to read through the sources and interpreted the information given in the question. She showed

different students' samples for peer discussion, with the hope that the students could learn from each other. She also gave a statistical profile of the performance in each sub question. I was deeply impressed by her dedication in her teaching. All students were attentive and engaged during the lesson. However, I noticed one of the brightest girls showed a displeasing look. Almost at the end of the lesson, she raised a question that made us stutter to respond. She said, "I have been trying my best to prepare for this examination. I would never have blamed anyone if I had been careless or lazy. However, you have just mentioned that to answer the "most" type question, we have to compare our choice with the other choices. You should not expect us to know this by ourselves." We were all speechless. "Instead of spending a lot of efforts to do follow up like doing an autopsy, why don't you prepare us well before hand?" Betty felt frustrated during the week, as she thought everything she had done was in vain. She said "*They really blamed me!*"

As a panel head, I had overlooked **the importance of relating assessment to teaching**, which is vital to facilitate students' learning. Traditionally, we all believe a specially designed difficult question should be reserved for the examination use. If we teach the students in advance, students might not consider it challenging enough. **However, are most average students well prepared for this question-type?** It is easier for teachers to pick students' mistakes from a post-mortem discussion. All too often teachers save their best thought-provoking questions, the ones that require analysis, application and evaluation, for their exams, leaving students frustrated and unprepared. **Do teachers separate teaching from assessment?** When students say an exam is unfair and tricky, they are often indicating that the teachers have used a different level of enquiry than that typically used for class discussion and assignment. **Have teachers set clear assessment objectives at the beginning of the term** so that students could know what they need to achieve towards the end?

In our second term panel meetings, we tried to relate our assessment to the teaching. With assessment objectives in mind, teachers had a better understanding of the skills and concepts to be assessed and hence the curriculum planning could match appropriately with the assessment.

We now realized that in order to enhance learning and teaching, "**never save the best for the last moment. as there will always be something better.**"

Reflection questions:

- Why is it important to align learning and teaching with internal assessment in the Liberal Studies curriculum?
- Do your students know beforehand how they are being assessed in school internal assessment? How do you make the students understand the assessment objectives?
- How do / did you enhance teachers' understanding of Liberal Studies assessment in your school ?
- What difficulties have you experienced in enhancing teachers' assessment literacy in Liberal Studies? What are the strategies you have used / will use in tackling the problems?