

## **Curriculum and Learning the Course *World Civilization* at Bangladesh Islami University, Bangladesh**

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### **Abstract**

Pedagogy is critical aspect of classroom teaching at all educational levels and particularly in tertiary level. Globally there has no unique teaching style to educate undergrad students, despite most universities basically follow the old-fashioned lecturing style. To assess students' learning, written examinations, assignments, presentation and field work are still followed while main emphasis put on formal examinations. *World Civilization* as a 100-mark mandatory course involving three credit for the third year law students in Bangladesh Islami University outlines wide coverage of the entire journey of human civilization that encompasses from the beginning of the universe to recent phenomena. The course vastly helps the students to extend their knowledge of different ancient, medieval and modern civilizations, major religions that immensely contributed the world, major wars that accelerated civilization growth and recent phenomena of world politics. This article about the pedagogy what I follow to educate undergrad students in and out of the classroom, curriculum what the department prescribed for them to understand the civilization and the assessment style what the university stipulated.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, Curriculum, World Civilization, Assessment

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## **Introduction**

As the teaching and learning of 'World Civilization', a course under broader discipline of World History, the scope for using diverse teaching tools is very limited except lecturing or storytelling. However, with the growth of modern technology, multimedia presentation involving image, video, sound and music has become popular in classroom presentation to the lecturers who are accustomed with the technology. The lecturing method is still dominating method at classroom teaching while taking written examinations is popular to assess the learners. This study is solely centered university level pedagogy and curriculum of 'World Civilization' with no scope of practical knowledge except visiting some convenience museums and watching related documentaries. Apart the tasks defined by curriculum and students' demand of summarizing diverse and vast information, I try to take the students out of the lecture-centric learning by suggesting them to watch relevant documentaries and movies, and read fictional novels to get deep understanding of the course subject matter. Therefore, for assessing the learners' acquirement, I try to use some diverse tools like multimedia presentation, assignment and debate.

## **Pedagogy of University Teaching**

As new university faculty members are often hired with no previous teaching experience or formal knowledge about pedagogy (Harris & Cullen, 2008, p. 58), I am not an exception. Globally concentration of study of pedagogy are more focused in primary and secondary school learning than university teaching and learning that laid confidence on faculties' intelligence and personal development.

According to Bain (2004) the best college teachers recognize that intelligence is expandable (students can learn), know their subjects extremely well, are active scholars, create environments that are supportive yet challenging, have a strong trust in students, and care about student learning and deep knowledge. Professors with deep understanding of their subjects are more likely to find alternative ways

of explaining concepts, create meaningful metaphors, and provide meaningful rationale for learning.

Filene (2005) posited that effective teachers take students out of their comfort zones and challenge them with “unsettling ideas, set high standards, demand introspection and hard work – all the while, heeding how students are responding” (p. 3). And Finkel (2000) defined “good teaching” as “...the creation of those circumstances that lead to significant learning in others” (p. 8). He went on to say that “Learning is the end; teaching is a means to that end. Teachers must never forget that end when devising ways to teach” (p. 8).

In 1995, Tom Drummond compiled a collection of practices that he believed constituted excellence in college (also university) teaching. The following are his core set of Best Practices:

1. **Lecture Practices** are defined as effective ways to present new information orally to fit differences in learning styles.
2. **Discussion Group Triggers** are ways to present common experiences to engage a group in discussion.
3. **Thoughtful Questions** are effective ways to formulate questions that foster engagement and confidence.
4. **Reflective Responses to Learner Contributions** establish mutually beneficial communication by reflective listening.
5. **Rewarding Learner Participation** is a way to support learner actions with well-timed, encouraging positives.
6. **Active Learning Strategies** foster active, constructive participation.
7. **Cooperative Group Assignments** are ways to assign formal cooperative tasks.

8. **Goals to Grades Connections** establish a logical agreement of goals and objectives, flowing to measures of performance, criteria and grading.

9. **Modeling** represents openness, continuous learning, and trust.

10. **Double Loop Feedback** facilitates the mutual awareness of how one learns to learn.

11. **Climate Setting** regulates the physical and mental climate.

12. **Fostering Learner Self-Responsibility** allows the learners to plan and evaluate much of their learning.

Many of Drummond's best practices and techniques are supported by other research. In 1916 John Dewey wrote that education is not an experience of 'telling and being told', but an active and constructive process. Even though this was realized over ninety years ago, lecture, which is clearly a method of telling, is still widely used today (Rieg and Wilson, 2007).

### **Curriculum of World Civilization**

The curriculum is the key reference point for teachers, particularly in developing countries, where it is encoded in the official textbook and teacher guides, often the sole resource used by teachers (Westbrook et. al, 2003, p. 12). Teachers' pedagogic approaches, strategies and practices thus serve to enact the curriculum. The curriculum links the macro (officially selected educational goals and content) with the micro (the act of teaching and assessment in the classroom), and is best seen as 'a series of translations, transpositions and transformations' (Alexander, 2009, p.16; original emphasis). The official curriculum is transacted and in the process gets transformed, as 'teachers and students interpret, modify and add to the meaning' embodied in the official specification (ibid.). Thus, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are interrelated and mutually influence one another in the day-to-day classroom interaction (Bernstein, 1975, Alexander, 2009).

Definitely curriculum developed by experts or professors intent to gain some objectives. The objectives of the course (World Civilization) are to enable the students understand the origin of the universe and mankind; to educate them how the ancient nomads survived in the formative volatile earth; which civilizations in how extend affected the modern knowledge, technology and culture; the change-making events that accelerated global formation; and today's technology-based civilization and its crisis. The aim of the course is to yield enthusiasm in the heart of the students to contribute for the humankind, not only lead an ordinary life.

**Course Curriculum:** The course curriculum engaged almost every chapter of human civilization. The curriculum of the course is: origin of the universe and man, ancient civilization: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Sinic, Indian, Greek and Roman, Persian and others, rise and spread of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Jainism, Islam and medieval knowledge society, Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment movements, French and Industrial revolutions, Colonialism and Imperialism, First and Second World Wars, Cold War and Capitalism, clash of civilizations and New World Order.

### **How I Teach the Course**

The course is prescribed as core for every third year student of Law Department and pass before graduating from the university. The course World Civilization is a 100 marks course involving three credits. As the academic activities divided into trimester, I get only four months to educate the vast syllabus and assess the students. I have to conduct two classes in each week according to routine and in this way total class number never remains 20-24 in each trimester. Usually I follow the lecturing model to teach the students as McKeachie (2002) noted that

Lectures are good for presenting up-to-date information, summarizing material from a variety of sources, adapting

material to the background and interests of a particular group of students at a certain time and place, helping students read more effectively by giving an orientation and conceptual framework, and focusing on key concepts or ideas.

Advantages to lecturing include that the lecturer has face to face contact with students and this shared experience can form a relationship. Pragmatic reasons for lecturing are cost efficiency and pedagogical efficiency (Filene, 2005). The students are assigned to do group works like writing assignment and multimedia presentation that enhance their oratory capacity as I believe what Filene said “the best lecturers add variety and drama into their teaching”.

As a lecturer, I normally prepare my lecture one week before the commencement of the schedule class of each trimester; because the department provides us with the course distribution attached with its content. I usually prefer reference book than making lecture note for the students as students can know more if reference books are followed. If any topic becomes too much ambiguous and diverse to understand, I prepare comprehensive lecture note. I also organize some power point slides thus student can go back to the old civilization period by watching relevant images and videos. Majority students prefer lecture note than following reference books as lecture note is comprehensive, confined to the topic and easy to understand but I believe without engaging reference books understanding the topic and acquiring knowledge will be incomplete.

During the lecture, I try to present the topic easy to understand and use whiteboard to write definitions according to different scholars thus helps the students to take preparation for examinations and achieve good result. This is because it is the first time the students come across the course; thus, they need to have a clear view of it so that they would appreciate it. To draw students' attention sometimes I deliberately tell wrong information or write in wrong spelling. As the lecture progress, I throw questions in relation to what I have just explained. Some questions need more explanation, more citation and

more examples to what I given them. In some classes, I ask the students to read out the texts from reference book or lecture note that aware students to draw their attention.

Lecturing is not all time serve the objectives of teaching what Filene (2005) stated that lecturing works less effectively than discussing for promoting independent thinking or developing cognitive skills. To make variety, in one or two classes, I show them video clips that exceptionally present the life of any particular civilization and ask them to take note from that. I try to take the students to make a journey in that civilization and their everyday life which demised hundreds years ago. Sometimes, I ask the good students to summarize my lecture and point out what I delivered thus other can understand in their own language. If I feel comport with the students attention in the class, I divided some students into several groups to engage constructive debate on, like, Egyptian Civilization contributed more than the Babylonian. Such debate compels the students to concentrate more and read attentively to win over the other teams.

As the medium of instruction is English, I usually go through my lecture in English but it needs translation into Bengali (the mother tongue) for better understanding of the topic. When, I feel any particular topic is hard to understand and digest for the students, I point out some key words and interlink them covering whole story that bereft off students from memorizing. Taking the basic topic unchanged, I sometimes walk through out the lane of knowledge and information that give them test of alternative learning and attractive topic within curriculum.

I think I follow most of the Tom Drummond's Best Practice for teaching in my class. Table 1 shows what I follow (either full or partial) or what I do not follow.

**Table-1: Application status of Tom Drummond's method**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Yes, I follow</b>	<b>No, I don't follow</b>
Lecture Practices	√	
Discussion Group	√	
Thoughtful Questions	√	
Reflective Responses to Learner Contributions		√
Rewarding Learner Participation		√
Active Learning Strategies	√	
Cooperative Group Assignments	√	
Goals to Grades Connections		√
Modeling		√
Double Loop Feedback		√
Climate Setting	√	
Fostering Learner Self-Responsibility	√	

### **Assessment**

Many students are aware of summative assessments from their secondary and higher secondary experiences. University has fixed two summative assessments like midterm examinations and final examinations and devised formative assessments like class test, assignment and presentation and class attendance which are not attractive to all students. Each category carries a defined mark that totals 100 marks. The marks distribution is given in Table 2.

In midterm examinations, students have to answer three questions and in final examinations, they have to answer the four questions. I usually take one class test in each trimester but sometimes, students prefer two class tests for their convenience. I prescribe group assignment and individual presentation in the beginning of trimester. The former posters the students' ability to write their understanding and critical thinking while the later exposes students' capacity to present their acquired knowledge and understanding. After



presentation, the other students and I usually ask some relevant questions to assess their apprehension about the topic what earlier prescribed to him/her. The class attendance mark depends on students' attendance in class and the class performance considers their attaining goal what I assess time to time in class.

**Table-2: Marks Distribution**

<b>Categories of Assessment</b>	<b>Marks</b>
Midterm Examinations	30
Final Examinations	40
Class Test	10
Assignment and Presentation (5+5)	10
Class Attendance and performance (5+5)	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Benefits of the learners**

As the educator of the course, I think the students who taught the course World Civilization become well-informed about the great civilizations which contributed today's development like each stair of a long staircase. The course develops the worldview of the students and after four months in acquiring knowledge, they keen to acquire more knowledge about the civilizations develops. The course yields a motivation to do something for the betterment of mankind. A developed worldview helps the students throughout their life to respect other culture, society and civilizations that contribute immensely for which we are blessed today.

### **Suggested major books for the course**

1. Pearce, F. G. (1965). An outline history of civilization. Bombay: Oxford U.P.

2. Wells, H. G. (1922). *A short history of the world*. New York: The Macmillan Co.
3. Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
4. Winks, R. W. (1993). *World civilization: a brief history*. San Diego, CA: Collegiate Press.
5. Adler, P. J., & Pouwels, R. L. (2012). *World Civilizations*. Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

## **Conclusion**

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits in which teacher is the key role player to make education or educational system perfect and empirical. As the course *World Civilizations* is historical, it might help the students know about the past undertaken the learning of history into practice in the different fields of orientation. The success of the history analysis mainly depends on how a teacher belongs to this area of study in terms of knowledge. But scholarly, the area of specialization is the key to the success of history analysis. And the course ‘*World Civilizations*’ requires complete deservingness of area of specialization, which may be the catalyst to teach this course. The logistic materials and all over supports of BIU to conduct the course are convenient, that has made the teaching and learning processes conducive to the teachers and students respectively. For being a history based course, it is enriching the students’ knowledge under systematic teaching procedure. In fact, the course under formal setting has effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts.

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