I was embarrassed in my reflections during the homewards journey after the exhilarating EBL day, to realise two serious errors of judgement in my contributions. The first of these was that I did not prompt enough thinking about my assertions, before we started on the questions and answers. The second, linked to that, was that I did not make available some extension of the assertions, for those who might want to pursue them further, on their own, or in communication with me.

In these brief notes I try to make good these omissions, to some extent.

John Cowan

***Beliefs about student learning in EBL***

***– and how that should affect facilitation***

1. At any point in time, a student or group should be able to articulate clearly the question for which they are seeking an answer.

*If a learner lacks a clear and succinct specification of what they are trying to do, or to learn, they are unlikely to succeed. We should establish a culture in which* ***their*** *regularly**considering and declaring their next learning destination is the norm, and is utilised within our conversations with them.*

1. Posing good questions is a demanding skill; tutors should set out purposefully to develop it.

*Vague questions or enquiries yield vague answers or information. Yet pinpointing what is needed does not always come naturally. It is easy (and dependent) for students to declare, in a plaintive plea for teacher-direction “I’m having difficulty with ..........” We need to help learners to be able to ask, of sources as well as of people, for the specific information which will help them to progress or themselves.*

1. Posing good questions is a valuable skill; the system should be seen to value it.

*As researchers and scholars, we value the person who can ask a searching question which is pertinent – especially if it is directed towards something which has been missing from discussion, input or enquiry so far. Since we value that critical thinking and the questioning arising from it, we should try to ensure that our assessment scheme, and our explicit feedback, recognise and reward such searching questions.*

1. EBL will, or should, demand much development of abilities; the plan for reflection and assessment should recognise that.

*In EBL schemes, students must analyse, judge, plan pro-actively, contribute effectively to group work, and so on. These abilities may often be relatively new to them. They will certainly bring new demands for them. It is useful to make space in the programme for students’ reflecting on what the next challenges are, and how they should be tackled – and for sharing such thoughts constructively with peers. It is then an essential feature of any aligned curriculum that such effort and development is assessed – and thereby rewarded. The system may not accord facilitators full freedom in this – but we should do as much as we can.*

1. Student-direction implies students’ specification of criteria, within agreed limits.

*Students cannot direct their development and learning without a clear idea, not only of what they want to achieve, but of how well they wish to do that. Judging how well - in anticipation, or during, or after the event - entails having criteria against which to judge progress, by describing performance in the same terms as are used in the criteria. Facilitators should prompt learners to articulate, and then apply, their own criteria to plans, progress and achievements.*

1. Student-direction implies formative and summative self-assessment.

*Students who are taking responsibility for their own learning and development cannot manage this without, as they progress, monitoring their progress and outstanding needs – in formative self-assessment, formal or informal. Then, in due course as Taras’s research has shown, they will learn much more from and during feedback if they have to make and declare their own assessment, before being told the tutor’s grade. It an arrangement which takes little extra time – and promotes productive reflective development.*

1. The potential of formative peer-assessment in EBL has yet to be fully harnessed in most settings.

*A growing volume of programmes, in Europe and in the East, are publishing their experiences of the cost-effectiveness for tutors, and the pedagogic effectiveness for learners, if there is structured opportunity for peers to formulate and offer constructive feedforward advice on draft work. This is something facilitators should encourage, offering and encouraging student autonomy, and enabling students to learn from their experiences of monitoring the work of others.*

1. Students need to be, and can be, trained to assess themselves and others objectively; and that is worth doing.

*The key word in this assertion is objectively. Judgements and assessments should be data-based, with data being compared with compatible criteria (see above). It takes less than two hours, in a motivating activity, to establish for learners the concepts involved in this process, and send them out to engage in it themselves, within the context of their course. Facilitators should endeavour to find time for such activity, even if as an optional extra. They should also declare to students who will be submitting work for assessment that they expect an objective self-assessment, and will discuss (and grade) on the basis of the rigour and objectivity and comprehensiveness of that self-assessment.*

1. Facilitating EBL should be ring-fenced from programme management and assessment.

*Recent studies, including one by Vlachopoulos and Cowan (awaiting publication) reveal that all too often the complications for student learning, and the ineffectiveness of some facilitated enquiry based learning, occurs when the staff tasks within and outwith the ring-fence (see unused part of ppt sequence) are not rigorously separated. Facilitators should operate within the ring-fence, and resist any temptation or request to move outwith it.*

1. If EBL is genuinely student-directed, there should be unconditional positive regard for the students’ choices of goals.

*If a student has the courage to declare a need or a goal which matters to them, facilitators should take that as an honest declaration, and accord it unconditional positive regard. If on a rare occasion, the student is testing the system, or playing games, that will be made apparent by them fairly early on. Until that happens, their need should be taken as sincere – and important. Note the options for handling needs, in the unused part of my ppt.*

1. It is important for EBL students to feel that they trust their tutors.

*Rogers and Brookfield, amongst others, have long stressed the importance of a trusting student/tutor relationship. It has been my experience in recent years that the more I move to facilitation, and especially virtual facilitation, the more students volunteer how important it is that they feel they trust me. I cannot extract from them what generates this trust; but sense that it is associated with an empathic relationship. It is certainly something that matters to learners.*

1. It is important for EBL tutors to believe in the ability, values and potential of their students - from the outset.

*One constant feature of much reporting of EBL experience concerns the extent to which learners have achieved heights of performance, learning and understanding of which, at the outset, their facilitative tutors would never have imagined them capable. The moral is clear. Don’t prejudge students in terms of their limitations. They will so often surprise us, if encouraged to achieve.*

1. When EBL students succeed, they need to be able to “fly the nest”, knowing that they did it all in their own strength, owing little or nothing to their facilitator!

*Perhaps the most hurtful experience for a committed facilitator is to devote time, effort, care and prompting to help a student to grow in strength and eventually to achieve or excel – only to find that the student honestly believes that they did this in their own strength. That’s just a cross which facilitators sometimes have to bear, recognising that such learner reaction is in a sense a tribute to the effectiveness of the facilitation of their learning autonomy,*

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