The Effects of the Crystal-Based on the Development of the Learners’ Four Desirable Characteristics

“The Student’s Desirable Characteristics Development at Higher Education Level”

Chantana KLOMJIT, Kingfa SINTOOVONGSE, and Mullawee ADULWATTANASIRI
Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen, Thailand

Key words: Desirable Characteristics, and Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

In the present society, peaceful interaction and living in harmony seem to be neglected. These values do not only come from the consequences of drastically rapid movement of the global economy but also the failure of the educational practice. The teaching and learning in today’s schools put less emphasis on the values of life in all aspects for personal development. The results of educational reform study that the Thai children’s scholastic achievement as well as their thinking abilities were at unsatisfactory level (Wiratchai, Nonglak. et al, 2004) was also demonstrated. These are the facts of unfavorable and unsatisfactory development of Thai learners’ thinking and scholastic achievement. It was apparently that it was about time for the people whose jobs are concerned with the policy and practice for the development of the Thai people to reconsider how to develop the Thais to be on the road for the development both thinking and scholastic achievement.

Therefore, it is about time that full development of Thai people in all aspects: physical and mental health; intellect; knowledge; morality; integrity; and desirable ways of life to live in harmony with other people should be developed (National Educational Act of 1999, Chapter 1; Section 6). In relation to all of these aspects, there are two questions asked as follows:

What are the desirable characteristics for full development?
How can these be developed?

According to the Delors Report (Yibing, Wang, 1998) sponsored by UNESCO, it is recommended that the so-called four pillars should be focused on the vision for the full development of children in the 21st century. These are:

Learning to Know: Learning how to learn and benefit from ongoing educational opportunities arising throughout life.
Learning to Do: Learning to skills necessary to practice a profession or trade and ability to face a variety of situations, often enforceable, and to work in a team approach.
Learning to Live together: learning other’s language, history, culture, tradition, political, and economic system, in order to live and interact together peacefully in a globalization context.
Learning to Be: Learning to develop his or her potential to the fullest in order to exercise greater independence and judgment with a stronger sense of personal responsibility.

The above four pillars have contributed to the establishment of the four desirable characteristics a Thai learner should possesses; (1) Smart Consumer (SMC); (2)
Breakthrough Thinker (BT); (3) Social Concerned (SOC); and Thai Pride (TP). These characteristics would help prepare an individual who will be able think creatively and critically, work wisely and constructively. These characteristics

The teaching and learning strategies derived from the principles advocated in Thailand’s first Educational Act of 1999 include situated and contextual learning, self-directed and self regulated learning, cooperative and collaborative learning, project-based learning, and authentic learning were claimed to be the means to an end on the development of student-centered learning. Based on the appropriateness of content structure and the learning process of teaching and learning approach as mentioned earlier was used in the Counseling course with a total number of 12 students in the second semester of the 2005 academic year at the Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University in the Northeast of Thailand.

This project was a subset of the research studies carried out at the Faculty of Education and was also part of the project under the Sattasila project of the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University. The model used here was claimed to be called “Crystal-Based”. However, the researchers had carried out the project throughout the semester by mainly using the key strategies as mentioned earlier based student-centeredness.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to develop the students’ four desirable characteristics by using the student-centered approach through the Crystal-Based Model of teaching and learning and to present guidelines for curriculum planning and management.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

3.1 The Target Group

This study was aimed to be a collaborative research and development whereby the teachers work together in developing the teaching and learning plans utilized the situated and contextual learning, self-directed and self regulated learning, cooperative and collaborative learning, project-based learning and authentic teaching and learning for the development of the students’ 4 desirable characteristics in the Counseling course as mentioned in the above. There were three teachers and 12 students collaboratively learn and assisted each other while learning and teaching proceeded accordingly.

3.2 The Context

The guidelines for teaching and learning from the National Educational Act of 1999 in Thailand has demanded teachers at Khon Kaen University to make changes for the improvement of instruction at the university level. The approaches related with the student-centered learning are used to make students learn meaningfully and teaching more effective. The context for this research was in the class where the 3 teacher researchers taught during the 2005 academic year. This course was at graduate level offered at the Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University which is located in the upper part region of the Northeast, Thailand. The Faculty is equipped with a medium size library containing books and documents for references including the modern internet search facilities. Moreover, the Faculty provides the students with computer rooms where they could work and interact with each other and with their teachers through the internet.
3.3 The Procedure
The teacher researchers had made schedules of meeting to make plans and arrangements for the application the Crystal-Based model of teaching and learning. The course syllabus and lesson plans were constructed and refined. The students were given orientation prior to entering into the teaching and learning organized throughout the semester. The teachers were often available for students outside class periods and open for more questions and discussion. They used the available intranet link to interact among themselves and with the students.

3.4 The Operational Definitions of the four Desirable Characteristics
(1) Smart Consumer (SMC). This characteristic can be described as one’s ability to think analytically and critically to choose to do or not to do based on substantial evidences and his/her own decision without being distracted, deceived, or tempted by others.
(2) Breakthrough Thinker (BT). This characteristic can be described as one’s ability to create new things and make them productive based on his/her own thought in his/her own culture.
(3) Social Concerned (SOC). This characteristic can be described as one’s ability to show his/her social awareness, accountability, responsibility, sharing, and working with others to make the betterment of the society.
(4) Thai Pride (TP). This characteristic can be described as one is proud of his/her own culture and value the others and their different perspectives, understand the value of change and accept the possibility of having one’s own ways of believing, behaving, and becoming.
(5) The student-centered model of teaching and learning is based on learning principles mentioned earlier and strategies for the development of the four desirable characteristics will be demonstrated in the following section.

3.5 The Application of the student-centered model of teaching and learning
The application was carried out by using the steps and strategies as follows:

1. Plan the learning experience by using self-regulated and self-directed learning. With teacher’s facilitation, the students planned their own learning activities. They chose the topics of their interests, made the outlines, and arranged the schedules for their studies. They started to work on their writing assignments by using the information obtained from their search of knowledge through a variety of resources.
2. Present and discuss by using cooperative and collaborative learning. The students presented the drafts of their writings. Open discussion were encouraged as well as feedback and recommendations.
3. Review and refine by using self-regulated and self-directed learning. The students revised their work as suggested. They made some improvement on their writings with their own regulation and direction.
4. Crystallize thoughts and understandings through self-regulated and self-directed learning. The body of knowledge was formulated after the students went through the second round of presentation. By this way, evaluation and conclusion were made for complete writings.

The above presentation shows the steps and strategies applied into the real conditions of teaching and learning where the students and teachers helped each other and made progress in their learning and development of the four desirable characteristics.
3.6 The Analysis and Synthesis of the Data
The data were collected periodically as planned with the use of documentary study, the teacher’s observation records, informal discussion among research participants, students’ summary and reflections, and the focus group interview. The content analysis was used to describe, identify, and interpret the findings.

IV. THE RESEARCH FINDINGS
The findings from this course is presented under the three categories: instructional procedure; the students’ characteristics; and the reflections.

- **Instructional Procedure**
The students learned through the 4 steps of the model with a little difficulty in the beginning but they had reflected their thoughts positively about the process of teaching and learning. These reflections were as follows:

  “The teachers have given opportunity for the students to plan and determine their own learning topics”

  “The students have practiced to take responsibilities which were accountable for the whole group work”

  “The student-centered approach has been used emphasizing students’ participation to meet the individual needs, interests, and abilities”

  “The students learned more and know the way to crystalize the knowledge by searching for information, selecting, working on them by exchanging, analyzing, and making conclusion……………………”

  “By this way, the knowledge could be obtained through different views and the students have to make decision to choose the best one with substantial evidences…..”

The students learned how to construct their own knowledge as they collected information from different sources. Having been open to various perspectives, they had made decision based on their understandings and available evidences. They planned, directed, and regulated their own learning and finally formulated an organized body of knowledge reflected from their writing assignments.

- **The Students’ Characteristics**
The students had developed the four characteristics as they engaged into a variety of learning experiences by using various resources of knowledge. They were trained in bringing information and ideas to the class, became more skillful, and open to criticism on their work. They learned to listen to others, to be flexible, responsible. As they proceeded through the steps they had decreased their self absorption, and moved themselves forward to make better pieces of written work. So, the Smart Consumer characteristic has been developed as well as Breakthrough Thinker. The Social Concern was developed through the cooperative learning and team building while they worked in group and tried to make best for their work. On the part of Thai Pride, the students had given the opportunity to develop their honesty and responsibility.

- **The Reflections**
The teachers reflected that the teaching and learning plan must be well-prepared, processed, and monitored with cooperation from students as they had to prepare in
advance for classroom activities. Otherwise, they would be lacking behind and felt inferior. The students found themselves to be more dependent on information and resources from the library. They had to work before, during, and after class sessions in order to complete their assignments and ready for in-class discussion. They learned to accept their strengths and weaknesses from their own recognition and their peers’ comments and feedbacks. It was taking more time for the students to be able to crystallize their understandings. Some of them thought that they were lacking in some prerequisite knowledge for this class. Sometimes, they felt that there was too much concentration on the process, then, the content was losing. Although they had limited time, they had shown their attempts to make their writings better. They valued the processes they had engaged and the products they had produced.

V. THE CONCLUSION

The group work used in the process of learning provided the opportunity for the students to work cooperatively and collaboratively. It was confirmed that the model was effective in helping these students learn productively as they could construct their pieces of work meaningfully through their written assignments, research projects, and products. Although there was only a few week periods of time for these characteristics development, Smart Consumer, Breakthrough Thinker, and Social Concerned were evolved and developed accordingly whereas Thai Pride was only emphasized whereby the course content was directly related. It was necessary to provide the students with activities and environment that they can practice on those skills needed for the development of the four desirable characteristics. It was also recommended that the teachers continue using the strategies of this model so that the four desirable characteristics can be further developed. The teacher was the key person who could plan the course systematically, facilitate, monitor, and examine the students’ performance closely. If the Faculty was aimed to produce the graduates who could think analytically, critically, and creatively, the curriculum planning and management should emphasize strongly on those related skills so that the proactive and productive teacher education program could be planned, delivered, and evaluated.

VI. References


