**Products of Workshop at SEDA Conference,**

**“Beyond the Tyranny of Learning Outcomes”,**

**Birmingham 16th November 2018: 13.55-14.40 Parallel Session 5**

**Led by Phil Race**

**Participant’s learning aspirations**

**On a pink post-it, please jot down a few words about what you want from this session.**

* Ideas I can share, confirmation of my dislike for learning outcomes.
* Ideas for more dynamic alternatives to learning outcomes.
* Help me think about ways in which we can use learning outcomes more effectively.
* Think about the myths of learning outcomes – to challenge the tyranny!
* Something to make me think about how I write learning outcomes.
* The importance of the idea that we need learning outcomes.
* What would count as a ‘good’ learning outcome? What is really wrong with learning outcomes as usually expressed?
* Is there a better way to measure learning without traditional learning outcomes?
* Stimulate my thinking and perhaps prompt me to new approaches.
* A good rationale to jettison learning outcomes.
* Consider the ‘worth’ of learning outcomes.
* Critical views on usefulness of learning outcomes.
* To know why we should consider challenging the poor learning outcome.
* A greater understanding of learning outcomes – their purpose and effect.
* A critique of learning outcomes.
* Opportunity to reflect on the need for learning outcomes.
* An insight into why learning outcomes may be a bad thing.
* ‘Enlightenment’ – I’d like some clarity about the extent to which Los are realistic.
* Iconoclasm, rethinking.
* To be provoked into thinking about something differently.
* To bring home some ideas as to how we might make Los more supportive – help our crafts students to learn.
* A way of debunking the myth that learning outcomes use be SMART, and written in Bloom’s taxonomy verbs.
* Tips on improving the practical use of LOs. How to align LOs and assessment.

**Participants’ learning incomes**

**On a purple post-it, please jot down a word or two about what you’re already bringing to this session?**

* Learning outcomes cynicism.
* A curriculum designer who may have to rethink the day job.
* Knowledge ofKS4 /LOs and of how to assess crafts in practice.
* Experience as a teacher, validator, external examiner and course designer.
* Considered how to get colleagues to use learning outcomes appropriately.
* A critical mind, not much experience.
* Bring unchallenged assumptions! Experience of students grappling with learning outcomes.
* Experience of having written and used learning outcomes.
* My own scepticism about learning outcomes.
* Insight from a different kind of university.
* Experience of writing and reviewing learning outcomes.
* ‘Curiosity’ and willingness to learn.
* Doubts.
* Used learning outcomes a lot to frame my teaching.
* Spent a lot of time developing LOs, but not sure students read them or find them useful.
* Advocate of learning outcomes.
* 13 years’ experience of applying vocationally-based LOs.
* Experience – both good and ill – of the ‘work’ LOs can do in curriculum design and development.
* 30 years’ experience of teaching. A distrust of behavioural psychology.
* I bring a healthy scepticism.
* I have experience in teaching and assessing, and want to see what other people think.
* Curriculum planning craftily trying to write LOs to allow my teaching to flex.
* Experience of questioning others’ use of learning outcomes terminology.

**Groups of participants very quickly produced on post-its the following thoughts triggered by some of Questions 1-7 (reproduced below as reminders).**

1. Why and how learning outcomes may have become ‘a tyranny’?

* Concerned about language. LOs might help us to order assessment. LOs are too dependent on behavioural psychology.
* Having to build in external agencies’ requirements – the complexity of language doesn’t support student understanding.
* Become a tick-box exercise – need critical questions.

1. What else, with hindsight, might be now be included in the ways we use intended outcomes, and what, with foresight, could be added to our approaches?
2. How might we make better use of students ‘learning *incomes’*?

* Negotiated assessment.

1. Can we improve things by finding out about *emergent* learning outcomes which occur? (Are these often more important than the intended ones?).

* Subject discipline is a major factor. In creative subjects outcomes may emerge, but what about midwifery, for example?

1. What *else* important may students have achieved, that they haven’t yet realised? (*Unrealised* learning outcomes)

* We can’t measure necessarily what they are yet to achieve, but we do need to acknowledge this. They may have picked up a social skill or developed a ‘contact’ for life. Do we need a different name? LOs for me are *minimum* expectations.
* Reflecting back and thinking forward at the end of degree. Call to action. Sharing the structure and rationale of their learning with students while they are students.
* Skills, social interactions, collaboration.

1. How best can we link evidence of achievement to learning outcomes: does written assessment sometimes only measure ghosts of the real achievement, and what evidence can only be assessed orally?
2. How best can we address learning *outgoings* – important aspects of learning that can’t be assessed, but will be really valuable five years later in career?

* Don’t worry about assessing ‘learning outgoings – know there will be some, and design to promote them.

**Miscellaneous thoughts on post-its**

* The potential to begin with ‘incomes’.
* Very difficult to challenge LOs as QA process takes so long – this means staff reluctant to update LOs within modules.
* Co-creation of LOs.

**Conclusions**

I think participants shared a tremendous amount of thinking in a very short time – very well done. I found it extremely interesting to transcribe your thinking, and hope you will find it very rewarding to look at the range of expertise you brought to the tasks (your incomes) and the wealth of your expectations.

The responses to selected questions from 1-7 are very illuminating – I wish so much we’d had twice the time to explore all of these in depth.

Thanks very much.

Phil Race, 17th November 2018