

National ICT in Education Congress 2008
LEARNING GUIDES AND REFLECTIONS OF TEACHERS ON THE
USE OF LEARNING GUIDES

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*“Learning can be fun and meaningful when teachers provide opportunities for students to APPLY their practical knowledge and skills; use INTERACTIVE learning approaches; and give greater emphasis on developing students’ CRITICAL and CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS.” This is the milieu that Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) expects to see in the teaching and learning process in schools when the teachers apply and use the prime teaching resource materials it developed, the **Learning Guides**.*

This paper provides information on BEAM Learning Guides and showcases the reflections of teachers and students on the influences brought about by these materials in schools.

INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education is a critical issue that may mean changing the present culture of learning in schools i.e. for teachers and students to get away from old and to adapt the new teaching and learning modes.

This challenge is courageously responded by BEAM, a project jointly funded by the governments of Australia and Philippines that aims to improve the quality of and increase access to basic education in Southern Mindanao. It develops and provides teachers with Learning Guides, a comprehensive and flexible teacher-resource and student-activity materials that can easily be modified by teachers to suit their own context.

These guides are strictly aligned with the learning competencies in the BEC and are developed based on Constructivism theory of teaching and learning. The activities are presented in a sequential manner through the “Six Stages of Learning” that promote the development of creative, critical and higher order thinking skills.

A Learning Guide System (LeGS), an internet-based system is developed by BEAM using the web-based distributing, authoring and editing protocol. Selected teachers from different schools of Southern Mindanao are provided with trainings and workshops using this application to build their capacity in developing teaching materials that would meet the needs of the students in schools. Since the teachers trained are given the freedom to design their

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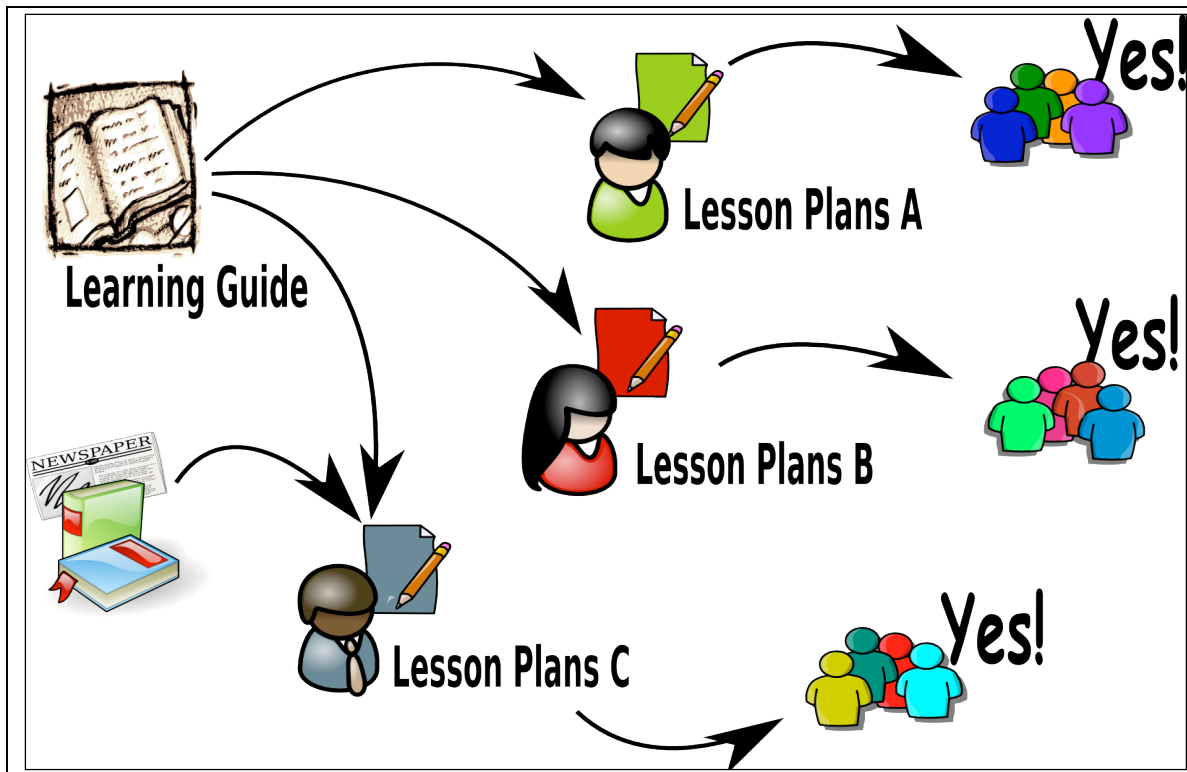
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own activities that suit to the kind of learners they have, BEAM looks forward to see significant improvement of students' learning outcomes.

THE LEARNING GUIDES

BEAM Learning Guides are guided with the premise of "Constructivism Theory of Learning" wherein learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. This means that when we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experiences. By then, we may change what we believe or consider the new information as irrelevant. BEAM believes that by allowing the students create their own understanding based on their previous learning, they will be transformed from passive receivers of information to active participants in the learning process.

The Learning Guides are a collection of comprehensive teacher-resource and student-activity materials that incorporate varied alternative teaching and learning strategies that can easily be modified by teachers to suit their own context.



These guides follow the sequence of the six stages of learning namely:

1. Activating Prior learning

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How does the teacher find out what the students already know? This stage aims to engage or focus the learners by asking them to call to mind what they know about the topic and connect it with their past learning. Activities could involve making personal connections.

2. Setting the Context

How will the teacher demonstrate where the new topic fits in students' learning? This stage introduces the students to what will happen in the lessons. The teacher sets the objectives/expectations for the learning experience and an overview how the learning experience will fit into the larger scheme.

3. Learning Activity Sequence

What is the best way to introduce the new concepts, knowledge and skills? This stage provides the information about the topic and the activities for the students. Students should be encouraged to discover their own information.

4. Check for Understanding

How can the teacher be convinced that the students understand? This stage is for teachers to find out how much students have understood before they apply it to other learning experiences.

5. Practice and Application

How will the students apply their new learning to different situations? In this stage, students consolidate their learning through independent or guided practice and transfer their learning to new or different situations.

6. Closure

What is the best way to bring the topic to a close? This stage brings the series of lessons to a formal conclusion. Teachers may refocus the objectives and summarize the learning gained. Teachers can also foreshadow the next set of learning experiences and make the relevant links.

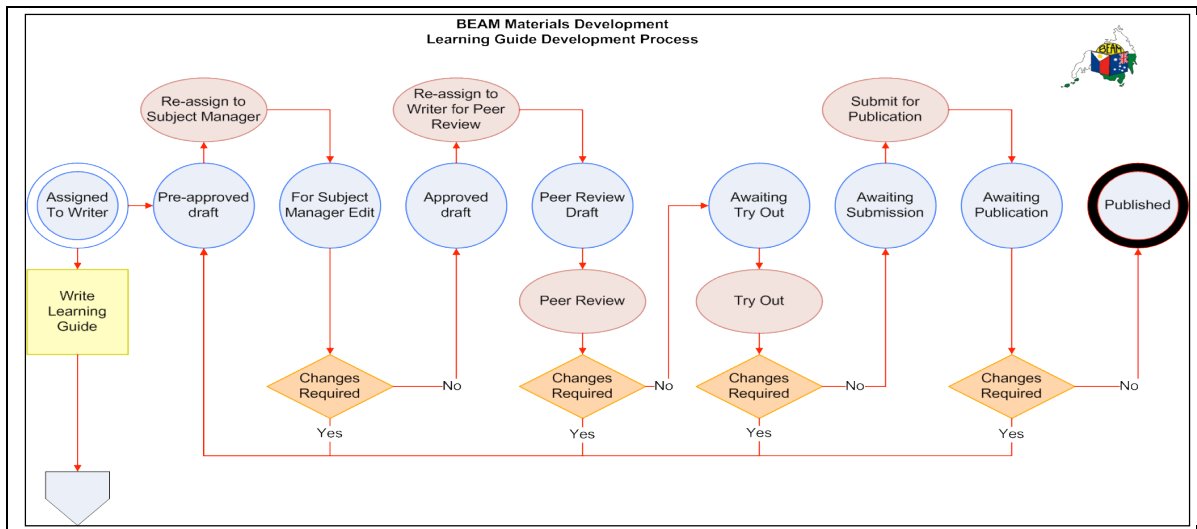
The Learning Guide maintains maximum quality since it follows the following criteria:

- Congruent with the stated competencies and defined objectives;
- Sequential and consistently structured;
- Accurate;
- Contain activities that are easily understood and achievable; and
- Relevant to the user

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Considering the complexity of the Learning Guide Development Process which is shown on the figure below, quality can be assured once they are published.



THE BASES OF LEARNING GUIDES DEVELOPMENT

The development of Learning Guides is basically anchored on the BEAM's Key Principles of Learning, which are:

1. We learn when we *want* to or *need* to. The content must have **RELEVANCE** to the learner.
2. We learn when we are engaged ie involved actively, **USING** the information, doing something with it, when we use our Senses. Practice makes permanent!
3. We learn when our **EMOTIONS** are positive and we are not under threat or stressed (the brain downshifts). Emotions drive attention – Attention drives Learning!
4. We learn when we build on what we know. We **CONSTRUCT KNOWLEDGE** and **GROW** our dendrites!

Since elementary and secondary teachers are expected to develop among the students the knowledge and skills defined in the Philippine Elementary and Secondary Learning Competencies (PELC and PSLC) of the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC), every activity in the Learning Guide is carefully designed to make students master the competencies in a particular grading period of grade/year level.

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Along with the students' mastery of the competencies in the BEC, the Learning Guides are also trying to achieve the general aims of elementary and secondary education to wit: provide knowledge and develop the skills, attitudes and values essential to personal development and necessary for living, developing and changing social milieu; to provide learning experiences which increase the child's awareness of and responsiveness to the changes in and just demands of society and to prepare him/her for constructive and effective involvement; to promote and intensify the child's knowledge of, identification with, and love for the nation and the people to which he/she belongs; and to promote work experiences which develop the child's orientation to the world of work and creativity and prepare him/her to engage in honest and gainful work. These aims are expected to carry on by the secondary teachers and thereby prepare the students for college and/or the world of work.

The result of the 2006 Region-wide Assessment in Mathematics, Science and English (RAMSE) conducted by BEAM across Regions XI, XII and ARMM also served as the basis on the development of the Learning Guides focusing on the identified least learned competencies. Since the result of RAMSE shows that students' ability in answering questions that require higher order thinking skills is significantly low, the Learning Guides are trying to address this need. General findings of this assessment show that the students do not achieve the 75% minimum performance standard — a result confirmed by the 2006 National Achievement Test (NAT).

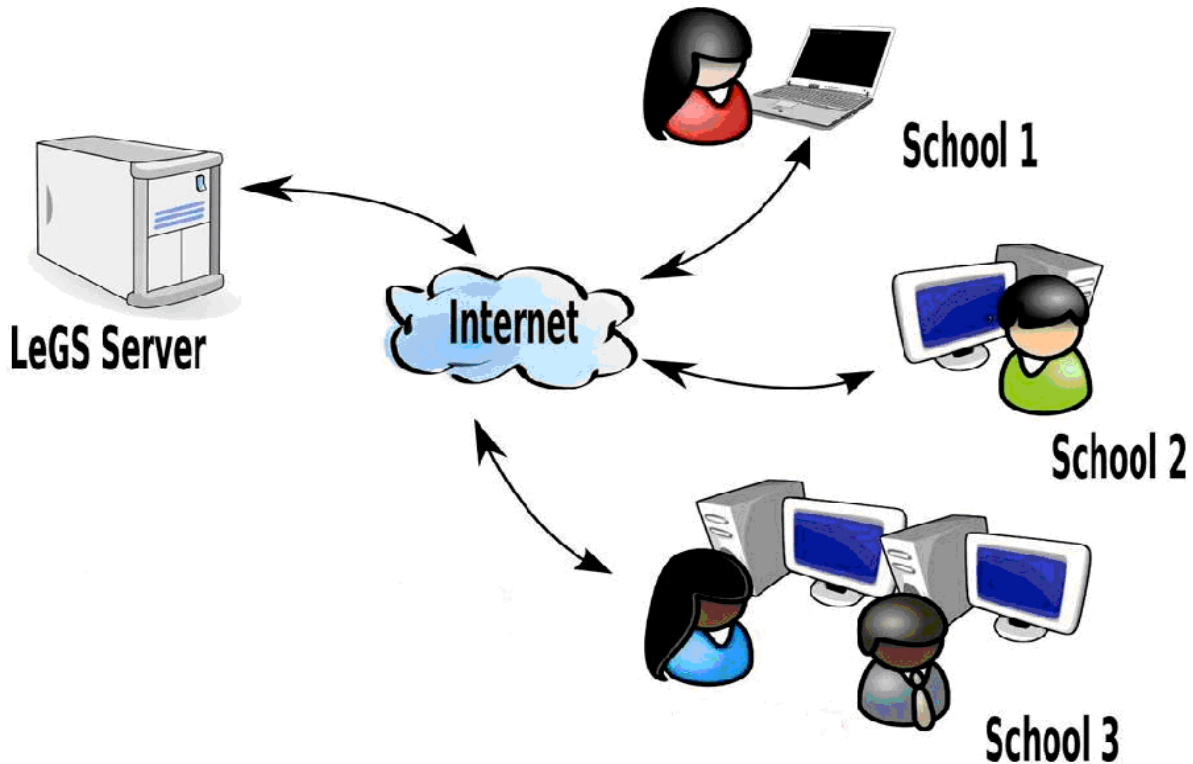
The 2006-07 Training Needs Analysis (TNA) conducted by BEAM also helped the writers develop Learning Guides that could address the needs of the teachers in easy facilitation of students' learning, particularly those competencies they consider as "most difficult to teach". The TNA across the three regions reveals that teachers need help in improving their knowledge on content and in using alternative teaching strategies.

THE LEARNING GUIDE SYSTEM (LEGS)

The Learning Guide System is a software tool BEAM has developed to assist writers to create Learning Guides in controlled authoring, editing and publishing environment. It presents an internet database of Guides that can be searched, downloaded and printed locally. Teachers are encouraged to use this software to create and submit Learning Guides for publication.

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LeGS into Schools Program

To empower teachers in developing their own teaching materials in schools and to assure the sustainability of the program, the Learning Guide System into Schools Program have been conducted. BEAM provides teachers trainings and workshops in writing Learning Guides using the LeGS software. By tapping potential writers among the teachers in schools, the program looks forward to increase the number of Learning Guide writers. At present, there are about 800 teachers who were trained how to develop Learning Guides with the use of the software tool.

REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF LEARNING GUIDES

The first material developed by BEAM was **Alternative Learning Strategies (ALTS)** in the year 2005. On the same year, it evolved into a Learning Plan which was later changed to Learning Guides (LGs) in the year 2006. Since then, Summer Teacher In-Service Trainings were conducted focusing on exploring, using and developing series of lesson plans from the Learning Guides.

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Learning Guides have been used in the following ways:

Help teachers develop the BEC competencies using the constructivist approach to teaching and learning through the School Based Learning Group (SBLG) where teachers are trained in the use of LGs.

As a whole, an intact unit of learning of the BEC competencies/topics;

To enhance the teachers' work on these competencies/topics;

The strategies in the LGs have been used in other topics, subjects and grade/year levels (following the re-echoing or sharing with other teachers who did not attend the target year of BEAM training)

From the findings provided in the 2007 Final Survey, the following significant changes brought about by the use of Learning Guides were:

- less lecturing, more student talk;
- chance to move around the class;
- more assisting/facilitating than “telling”;
- provide students with more hands-on activities ;
- instructional ideas and practices are shared with co-teachers;
- better preparation since activity sheets and resource materials are attached in the LGs;
- modified strategies from the Learning Guides are being used in their classroom teaching;
- Learning Guides serve as a guide/reference in teaching and developing teachers' lesson plans.

With the use of Learning Guides, the following students' learning behaviors are observed:

5. actively engaged in activities;
6. spoke and questioned more;
7. developed their critical thinking skills;
8. children are motivated to learn and discovered how to learn on their own;
9. greater student interaction, e.g. working in groups, pairs, group sharing of outputs;
10. exhibited better interaction with their teacher and among peers;

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11. enjoyed the activities;
12. scored well in assessments

Many school heads said that the impact of the Learning Guides could be seen in the teaching practice of those using them. They have noted the following changes in teachers' instructional strategies as a result of using the Learning Guides:

- integration of Learning Guides in the lesson plan;
- the use of Learning Guides as a main resource when teaching the topic/competencies;
- teachers increased efforts in preparation for and in the actual teaching;
- change in the teachers' teaching from "chalk talk" to using graphic organizers, semantic webbing, etc.;
- change in students' learning behaviors.

Personal Reflections on the Use of Learning Guides

School Heads

"With the Learning Guides, the students are more involved and participative in the learning process. The teacher acts as a facilitator and less talk. Parents are supportive, that is one of the changes in the school. The classrooms are more student-centered, different corners with activities. Students' outputs are displayed and students were motivated to participate more because their work is published." - *Mrs. Eva Cospe, Principal, Silway 8 NHS RXII, South Cotabato*

"It is contributing to the raise of performance level, specially in the reading test of Grade III pupils in the District Achievement Test" - *Pedro Bansalan, Principal, Digos City Division*

"The changes in the teachers' approach in the classroom is their milestone" - *Principal, Ruparan National High School*

Teachers

"The activities allowed the pupils to learn by their own with the teacher serving only as facilitator. They are motivated to think, and apply their skills, and they have learned to work cooperatively with the group." - *Mrs. Melanie V. Taglorin, Master Teacher 1, Cotabato City Central Pilot School.*

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“I observed that my students are engaged in all the activities.” - *Maria Cristina Sagarino, Teacher 2, Salvacion Elementary School, Panabo City*

“The students are enjoying the activities and they had their share of responsibilities.” – *Genamie Solitario, Pangl Elementary School, ConVal Division.*

“I don’t spend time looking for activities that would address the multiple intelligences of my students.” - *Meloriza Duguran, Master Teacher 1, Daniel R. Aguinaldo national High School, Davao City.*

Students

“In our elementary grades, we were not doing group activities, but now, we are given the chance to share our ideas through group activities” – *Angie Tacda*

“We like our lessons this year because we are using the Learning Guides in which lessons are easily understood” – *Michelle C. Albert*

“During our first year in High School, we do experiments without learning and activity materials but now, teachers use indigenous materials in our class.” – *MiaMae Abadilla*

“Everyday, we are excited to attend our classes and we look forward for more enjoyable activities in the classroom” – *Clara Ramos*

Problems Met on the Use of Learning Guides

The BEAM In-Service Trainers found difficulty in convincing teachers to use the Learning Guides. It took sometime for the Learning Guides to be fully implemented in schools in Southern Mindanao. With the efforts and supports of the Regional, Divisional and the District Staffs, Learning Guide has established its worth in schools. However, problems in its implementation were met along the way, to wit:

- The “Six stages of Learning” was new to most teachers.
- They perceive Learning Guides as long version of lesson plan that can be given in a “one shot deal”.
- Teachers are complaining that the materials to be used as suggested by the Learning Guides are expensive.

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- Teachers are neither skilled nor experienced in making sequence of related lesson plans.
- Some teachers are resistant to change. Since they are used to the prototype lesson plans, they find the Learning Guides a burden.
- At first, students found difficulty in adjusting to new milieu suggested by the Learning Guide which is more on group activities.
- Since, Learning Guide writers are few; some Learning Guides are not developed and delivered on time to schools.
- Since the writers are also involved in the In-Service Trainings as trainers, the development of the Learning Guides is sometimes delayed.

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