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IN | OUT

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Students should fill in Sections A and C in BLOCK LETTERS and include this sheet each time an assignment is submitted.

SECTION A

Course Classroom Studies. E461

4 July

DATE

Assignment No. 2. Assignment Title Investigation Into A Problem

Student Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms. Pugh, Donald E. 779078G

SURNAME

INITIALS

STUDENT NO.

Tutor R. Schibechi
NAME (BLOCK LETTERS)

SECTION B

TUTOR'S COMMENTS

This essay, together with your previous effort (including tape) provides a well thought out and investigated problem area.

Assessment

4

Tutor's Signature

RS Schibechi

Date

8.7.77

Note to Tutor: When this section is completed, please return to External Studies Unit with assignment.

SECTION C

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Investigation Into A Problem: Unit II.

Classroom Studies

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Introduction:

This essay is a report on an investigation into the teaching of a classroom lesson in economics at the grade 11 level at Christ Church Grammar School. Choice of curriculum, teaching methods, means to implement these methods and evaluation are often determined not only by the teacher, and the teacher's educational background, but also by pressures placed on the teacher. These include pupil and administrative expectations, and actual administrative constraints including timetabling restrictions, limited resources, large teacher workload, and classroom directives. Identification of the school framework to which teachers and students conform, and school aims as well as the curriculum syllabus is necessary to investigate the reasons underlying the teaching of a lesson in a certain manner. Classroom problems ought to be realistically examined and solved within the framework and expectations set by the students, school, and community.

Curriculum Design:

Design of the economics curriculum is based not on a school or teacher assessment of the needs of society, students and teacher, but rather on a fixed government syllabus. This syllabus, published by the department of education, lists the content for the grade 12 leaving examination which ultimately determines student entry into university. Consequently, although alternative topics may be discussed within economics, it is necessary for the teacher to cover the syllabus closely, so that the students will be well prepared for the final examination.

*can it
be both?
what do
you understand
by these terms!*

From a curriculum point of view, the syllabus is content oriented. The main aim of the syllabus is to permit the student to "appreciate the essence of the economic problem (the need for rational choice when means are scarce and ends unlimited) and its application in all levels of society from the individual to the nation, and its implications in personal and social decision making." The end of the course is to provide students with the ability to analyze and evaluate Australian economic events, and to have an awareness of the influence of resources on Australian economic growth.

~~Education Dept.~~
(West Australian Government, 1976)

Although the syllabus does break each unit down into topics, and provides further references, it does not provide any weighting as to the relative importance of topics. Nor does it suggest any method, other than case studies, for implementing the curriculum. The syllabus also fails to suggest alternative means for implementing the curriculum and does not suggest means of evaluation. Implementation of the syllabus is a problem of the teacher, with little guidance from the syllabus on methods,

The teacher's problem, when faced with this syllabus, is to prioritize topics and times to be spent on each topic. The teacher must then select reading materials and case examples which best illustrate the concepts and principles to be presented. The teacher must decide on methods by which this material is to be presented to the students. This problem may be compounded by the

*Is this
acknowledged
by the syllabus
in the TAE exam?*

difficulty that the subject matter may be remote from the lives of the students, abstract, and relatively uninteresting. The teacher needs to make the material immediate, real, concrete and exciting for the students. Only if the student is self-motivated through interest to research and pursue further economic issues, has the teacher been truly successful.

Methods to achieve these ends may appear numerous and may range from formal blackboard presentations to other techniques such as value clarification, and enquiry oriented learning, including problem solving and discovery. Once the teacher has selected his method, he needs to decide on the means of implementing the method. Enquiry and discovery may be promoted by projects involving students in data collection and case studies into certain industries. Other techniques may include student designed and played simulation games, student debates, student presentations, classroom discussion, guest speakers, and use of audio-visual materials.

Yet all these methods/means must be fitted into the context of the school. Rigid timetabling, desks bolted to the floor, administrative insistence on quiet classes, and student expectations as to the teacher's classroom role, all tend to urge the choice of some classroom methods over others. Although the classroom teacher appears to have freedom of choice, in fact, he tends to be locked into both a rigid syllabus, and conformance to confining norms of the school administration and the expectations of the students.

Needs Assessment:

These norms and expectations are well expressed for Christ Church in a needs assessment conducted by Peter Tannock. (1973) Tannock surveyed five school groups including students, teachers, parents, ex-students, and the school council to determine their views on fifty cognitive and affective objectives for the school. The highest rating of priority by the five groups was the promotion of the intellectual achievement of the students.

Although this needs assessment occurred at Wesley, the results may be generalized to Christ Church Grammar School. Both schools are private and are close competitors, offering similar services, for the clientele of students from a middle and upper socio-economic protestant class structure.

Many students in grade 11 share this end, ^{intellectual achievement} since they intend to embark on university studies, while non-intellectually oriented students tend to terminate their studies at the end of grade 10. Tannock's (1973) need assessment indicates that a high percentage of parents encourage their children to pursue extra work, beyond the requirements of the course, and have high educational expectations for their children, which include university or further training beyond the high school level.

Traditional Structure:

The most effective means of promoting intellectual development as seen by the school, is conformance to the the traditional Grammar School model. This model is followed by the majority of teachers and is consequently

familiar to and accepted by the students. It is characterized as follows:

1. The class is normally taught as a whole.
2. All students perform the same exercises and progress simultaneously.
3. Timetabling is rigid and strictly adhered to.
4. The class room environment tends to be unrelated to economics, and is limited to a few prescribed textbooks.
5. Children must remain in their seats.
6. There is considerable stress on maintaining a quiet classroom as this is regarded as symbolic of discipline and productivity.
7. Students must learn obedience and discipline and to follow directions.
8. Stress of teaching is on subject disciplines and mastering abstract academic concepts.
9. Checks are regularly made on student progress.
10. Activities are desk oriented and the students are not permitted free movement.

The class tends to be teacher-oriented. The teacher chooses and initiates economic units and assigns specific homework to the students. Time scheduling is set by the teacher and determines how long the lesson will last, and the amount of time available to students for class activities. Determination of teaching methods and means is also made by the teacher.

This traditional structure is confining in numerous ways. The rigid timetabling prevents students from undertaking projects and games within the classroom that require lengthy time periods to complete. Group

in some way, read like 19th century print. Red

from the above, is slow read "must be"

work is restricted both by demands of other teachers for desks in neat, orderly rows, and by an insistence by the school administration that classrooms should be kept as quiet as possible. Although field trips are possible, they are limited in number by other teachers who resent having students absent from their classes. The students, themselves, by senior grade, have come to respect, and expect the traditional teacher-oriented structure as conducive to learning, and do not tend to be as receptive to more innovative, student oriented activities.

Consequently, it is apparent that the process of a classroom lesson, is somewhat predetermined within the rigid mould set and maintained by the school. Analysis of classroom problems must be undertaken in such a way as to strengthen and make more effective the traditional classroom model in fulfilling school needs. These are principally in strengthening the cognitive abilities of the upper level students in preparation for their grade 12 leaving examination and success in university. It is unrealistic to suggest innovative ideas, outside the traditional structure, since it is improbable that many such ideas could be implemented.

Lesson Plan: Economics Lesson.

The lesson plan, of the lesson chosen for investigation, followed the framework suggested by Hauenstein. (1972) This framework is based on presenting a short overview of the lesson, followed by presentation, discussion questions, activity management, and conclusion.

In the lesson taught for this investigation, the overview is short, lasting three or five minutes, and introduces the lesson topic of production and defines and applies it. Presentation of the lesson, as well as discussion questions are merged into a formal, socratic style review of concepts of production, capital, types of firms, limited liability and their inter-relationships. Activity management is brief and consisted of classroom reading of the text and a formal discussion of various points made within the text. The conclusion of the lesson involved setting homework for the following lesson.

Classroom management conformed with the model of the traditional classroom in almost every respect. The class was taught as a whole with no allowances for individual differences. The students all completed the identical reading and were required to learn identical data on production. The lesson was abstract, and theoretical, and confined to textbook learning. A traditional seating plan was maintained and lesson timing, choice of content, initiation of information and classroom direction were teacher-oriented. Stress was on student passivity and quietness on the part of the majority of the students, with the exception of students answering questions. Students who failed to look alert, or to remain quiet, were spoken to in disciplinary terms. This approach is typical of most classes at the school and is regarded as normal.

The Problem:

The problem of the lesson arises in its inefficiency in fulfilling the school's and disciplines' objectives; cognitive development of the students, particularly in learning the essence of economic problems, and in applying these problems concretely to everyday society. Students, although they can answer simple questions, involving recall, have difficulties in answering more abstract cognitive questions, which involve not only the recall of information but the analysis or synthesis of this information into its component parts or generalizations respectively. Students also have difficulty in the application of deductive or inductive processes to particular local and concrete situations. For instance, although students may appear to know answers to simple questions on production and the firm, they are unable to apply these principles in concrete situations such as an analysis and application of the concepts of the firm and production to the operation of the local school canteen.

Some insight into the problem is provided with the realization that, in a traditional classroom, students will tend to reflect the behaviour and skills which the teacher is stressing. Although this may seem axiomatic, its significance lies in the insight that if the teacher fails to give significant stress to skills and practice in higher levels of cognitive thinking, the students will fail to develop these behaviours. In more group oriented situations, students may pick up skills and

cognitive abilities, not taught by the teacher, through group interaction. No so in a tightly controlled, traditional situation. Here, the teacher must assume responsibility for the learning of the students because the teacher determines the use of the students' time and chooses the materials which the students will learn, and the questions which the student will consider and answer. The solution to the problem of a lack of high level cognitive thinking would seem to lie in an analysis of the presentation and discussion sections of the teacher's lesson plan to ensure that adequate practice is being given to answering high level cognitive questions. It is hypothesized that increased attention by the teacher, to asking more difficult and thought provoking questions, within the classroom would tend to cause the mental disturbance and reflective thinking which characterizes higher level thinking on the part of the student.

Conclusion:

This background information has been put forward to establish the purpose of economics instruction in a lesson at Christ Church Grammar School and to establish the framework within which the instruction took place. A problem has been suggested. Academic research into this problem and an application of this research to the specific economics lesson to clarify the problem will be the next task.

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Tannock, Peter et al., Wesley College Educational Research Project: Report. Perth, Mimeograph, April, 1973.

Hauenstein, A. Dean. Curriculum Planning for Behavioural Development. Worthington, Ohio. Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1972.