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ABSTRACT

A discussion of geography's place in the curriculum and suggested methods for teaching geography are presented in this paper. Geography may be included in the curriculum in a variety of ways, such as infusing it throughout the curriculum or designing an integrated curriculum with geography as the core. Principles of learning derived from educational psychology should form the basis for teaching geography. The geography curriculum must stress: (1) interesting experiences for students; (2) meaningful learning opportunities; (3) purposeful lessons and units; (4) provision for individual differences in the classroom; (5) balance among diverse objectives; and (6) appropriate sequencing of activities. The study of different philosophies of education will help teachers attain clarity of ideas pertaining to each philosophical school of thought. A carefully selected philosophy of education may provide a basis for rational decision-making in terms of objectives, learning activities, and appraisal procedures. Microcomputer use and the variety of available software add other dimensions that provide for individual differences among students. (SM)

Geography in the Social Studies

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Geography in the Social Studies

How much emphasis should geography receive in the school curriculum? Geography may be taught as a separate subject. It could receive equal emphasis as a curriculum area as compared to English, mathematics, and science.

Geography may also be fused into the social studies. Thus, geography, as well as other social science disciplines such as history, political science, economics, anthropology, and sociology can be taught as being related. The integrated curriculum may also be stressed in that geography is the core of the social studies. The above named social science disciplines may be emphasized therein, plus science and mathematics as it assists in making learnings meaningful to students. Relating the social science disciplines with mathematics and science integrates the curriculum.

Current events in its diverse dimensions emphasizes the importance of a study of geography in ongoing lessons and units for students. Place geography, as one example, is highly important when relating happenings to where the specific event took

place. News items on radio, televisions, newspapers, and newsmagazines indicate that place geography is very salient for learners in the school setting. Cultural, economic, physical, and human geography emphasize additional understandings, skills, and attitudinal objectives for student attainment.

The balance of this paper will discuss the teacing of geography in the school curriculum.

Principles of Learning in the Geography Curriculum

Geography teachers need to emphasize desirable principles of learning when choosing objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures.

First of all, students need to experience interesting experiences in geography. With interests of students to achieve goals, effort is put forth in learning. Interest and effort become integrated entities and not separate from each other. Interest is a powerful factor in learning on the part of students. Thus, teachers need to observe students carefully to notice if interest is inherent in learning. Learning opportunities need to be selected which assist students to achieve set establishment. Attention of learners

have then been secured to achieve, grow, and develop in the geography curriculum.

Secondly, students need to understand subject matter being taught. Meaning is then attached to ongoing lessons and units in geography. The teacher needs to adapt instruction to present achievement levels of students. Learning activities should not be excessively difficult. Students tend to give up in achieving when content in geography is excessively difficult. Boredom may set in if subject matter is too easy for students. New content needs to be acquired by students and yet the subject matter is challenging and stimulating.

Thirdly, students should perceive purpose in learning. With purpose, students perceive reasons for learning and achieving. With deductive methods, the teacher may clearly and concisely explain to students reasons for learning subject matter in an ongoing lesson or unit. With induction, questions may be raised by the teacher to guide students to establish reasons for participating in an ongoing learning activity.

Fourthly, individual differences need ample provision. Slow, average, and fast learners need to achieve optimally. Each should attain as much as possible in the geography curriculum. No one should be deprived in securing the best education possible in geography.

Fifthly, balance needs to be emphasized in geography learnings for students. Thus each category of objectives receives adequate emphasis. Understandings (acquiring facts, concepts, and generalizations), skills (problem solving, as well as creative and critical thinking), and attitudinal (feelings, values, and beliefs that are positive) objectives must be emphasized in ongoing lessons and units. Understandings, skills, and attitudes are classified as general objectives. They are more open-ended and have less structure, as compared to measurably stated objectives. The latter to achieve balance in the geography curriculum needs to stress cognitive (developing well intellectually), affective (achieving positive attitudes), and psychomotor (achieving quality motor skills) objectives.

Each category of objectives is related to the other categories. Thus, achieving well attitudinally should assist in growing effectively in attaining understandings and skills general objectives. Or, attaining well in the affective domain should guide students to achieve more effectively in the cognitive and psychomotor domains.

Sixthly, learners need to acquire sequence in learning. In mastery learning, the geography teacher arranges objectives in ascending order of complexity. From the simple to the complex is a quality guideline to follow when arranging objectives in a simple to complex sequence. A logical geography curriculum is then in evidence.

Toward the other end of the curriculum, a psychological lesson or unit in geography may be developed. A psychological curriculum stresses that sequence in learning resides within the student, and not within the teacher or materials used in teaching. Teacher-student planning of objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures emph sizes a psychological geography curriculum. A learning centers

method of instruction may also emphasize a psychological curriculum. Thus, students sequentially select which tasks to pursue and which to omit in geography. Time on task is highly important. The student does the sequencing of learning opportunities in a psychological curriculum.

Quality sequence is important in order that students may be successful in learning and achieve in a more optimal manner.

To summarize diverse principles of learning which are important for teachers to emphasize, the geography curriculum must stress

1. interesting experiences for students.
2. meaningful learning opportunities.
3. purposeful lessons and units.
4. provision being made for individual differences in the classroom.
5. balance among diverse kinds and types of objectives.
6. appropriate sequence of activities for students in the school and classroom setting.

Philosophy of Education in the Geography Curriculum

A careful study of the philosophy of education may well assist teachers to do a better job of teaching.

Experimentalism, as one philosophy, states that one can only know experiences. Individuals live in and experience society. The geography curriculum then should not be separated from the societal arena. School and society are one and not separate entities. Changes occur rather continuously in society. Society is definitely not stable but subject to the realm of change. With change, problems arise. Students with teacher guidance need to identify lifelike problems in society emphasizing geography. Data from a variety of reference sources needs to be secured. The data sources can be basal textbooks, library books, audio-visual aids, direct observation, maps, globes, and software content. A hypothesis may then be developed. The hypothesis is tentative and subject to testing.

Additional learning activities may be utilized to test the hypothesis. After testing, the hypothesis is accepted, refuted, or modified. The steps of problem

solving are flexible and informal, not rigid and inflexible.

Idealism, as a second philosophy of education, stresses an idea centered curriculum. To an idealist, one can only know ideas pertaining to the natural and social environment. The teacher as an idealist in philosophical orientation needs to guide students to acquire much subject matter. Concepts and generalizations that are vital need to be obtained by learners. The abstract is prized much more highly as compared to the concrete. Subject matter content may, of course, be secured by learners outside the framework of problem solving, according to idealists.

The teacher needs to possess much subject matter in the teaching of geography and be academically talented and inclined. He/she must be able to stimulate and motivate students to achieve optimally academically in the geography curriculum. Concepts and generalizations taught must be chosen with careful attention by the teacher.

With idealism as a philosophy of education, mental development of students is of prime importance.

Cultivation of the intellect is the major goal in teaching geography. Mind is real and needs to be developed with the use of reputable textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, maps and globes, excursions, as well as audio-visual aids which emphasize academic learning. Ideas in terms of universal geographical concepts and generalizations need acquisition by learners.

The student in beginning his/her years of formal schooling is a finite being. The finite individual is limited in intellectual growth, but moves toward the Infinite with a quality curriculum taught by well trained, dedicated teachers stressing intellectual achievement of students.

Realism, as a third philosophy of education, emphasizes that one can know the real world in whole or in part as it truly is. The student then can receive a duplicate of that which exists in the environment. The geographical phenomena are known as they are and exist in and of themselves.

With knowing the real world as it truly is/exists, measurably stated objectives become important. These specific ends represent the real world in its totality. One cannot know what exists beyond the use of the five senses, namely seeing, feeling, tasting, touching, and smelling. Nothing exists which is not in the senses, according to realists.

The real world of geography then needs to be divided into measurable components so that students may attain optimally on an individual basis. Each learner needs to achieve as much as possible in attaining the measurably stated objectives. The ends are precise so that it can be ascertained if a student has or has not achieved a specific objective.

The geography teacher needs to select learning opportunities which assist students in attaining the precise ends. Frequent testing is necessary to determine if objectives have been achieved by students. Pretests are good to use to determine where each student is achieving at the beginning of the unit of study in geography. Post tests also should be given at the end of the unit in geography. Thus, a teacher may

gauge his/her effectiveness i teaching by noticing gains of each learner from the pretest to the post test. Within the pretest to the post test, each learner should achieve as much as possible.

Existentialism, as a fourth philosophy of education, advocates the subjectivity of truth. Truth resides within the student. Learners individually need to have freedom to select objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures. Choices made are based on personal needs, interests, and convictions.

Student-teacher planning of ongoing lessons and units in geography could emphasize tenets of existentialism. With a learning centers philosophy, students individually could sequentially choose which tasks to pursue and which to omit. Time on task is important. A psychological curriculum is emphasized when students individually sequence their very own learning activities.

As students progress increasingly so with existentialist philosophy, additional tenets may be emphasized such as values clarification emphasizing

geography in the curriculum. Values need to be clear. Learners ultimately should act and make choices based on clarity of values expressed orally and in writing.

Existentialists believe that persons are condemned to be free. Each person, from among alternatives, engages in decision-making. Decisions made, as a true existentialist, can be awe-inspiring in life. They affect the self and others. To let others choose for the self dehumanizes the latter. To be human means to make choices and decisions.

Teachers of geography need to possess clarity of ideas pertaining to each philosophical school of thought. Ways of implementing each into teaching-learning situations to assist students to attain optimally is a must. Philosophies need to be selected by the teacher which assists each student to achieve as much as possible in the geography curriculum.

Computer Assisted Instruction in Geography

Computer assisted instruction (CAI) needs adequate emphasis. Quality software needs development which is clear, meaningful, interesting, and purposeful to

students. Debugging is important in software development. This eliminates spelling, punctuation, and other types of errors dealing with the mechanics of content contained in software.

Secondly, CAI should provide ample opportunities for students to respond to questions and multiple choice items based on previously read content on the monitor. Students need to receive feedback as to the correctness/incorrectness of each response made. If students are not permitted to make an ample number of responses within a software package, the program becomes like a lecture or a page from a textbook which presents subject matter in a one way street communication.

Thirdly, a software program must contain quality sequence. With appropriate sequential learnings, the student can experience a high rate of success. Each new response is based on previously acquired learnings. In a step by step procedure, students learn new subject matter which is related directly to what was learned previously. A high rate of success needs to be in the offing for each student when CAI is in the offing.

Fourthly, ample software in geography needs to be available which fits into the title of the geography unit presently being emphasized. The software program needs to relate directly to the unit title presently being stressed in the geography curriculum.

Fifthly, software content must be on the understanding level of students. Content too difficult makes for frustration on the part of students. A lack of success in learning will be in evidence. Subject matter which is too easy lacks challenge and boredom may well set in for students. New content must be in the offing and yet the subject matter is attainable by learners.

Sixthly, content presented on the monitor is accurate. Incorrect ideas need to be eliminated from software packages. Students need good models to emulate. The good models on the monitor present accurate subject matter to students.

Kinds of Available Software

Software to be used in teaching students depends upon the purpose involved.

Drill and practice software has as its purpose review of significant facts by students. Retention of facts, concepts, and generalizations is important. With review in the form of drill and practice, better retention of subject matter is possible. Trivia must not be inherent in drill and practice software. Rather, salient content is presented as drill and practice on the monitor.

Tutorial, as a second type of software, emphasizes new subject matter being presented to learners on the monitor. The new content must be sequentially presented. Each new idea presented relates directly to that presented previously. With quality tutorials, learners may experience success in learning. Each sequential fact, concept, or generalization presented is related in a specific order. With the programmer arranging the sequential items, a logical curriculum is in evidence.

Simulation, a third kind of software, stresses problem solving experiences Several learners may be involved in a single simulation software package. Cooperative decision-making is then in evidence when

solving problems. Each problem must be real and life-like. Artificial situations have no place in simulations. Simulations are based on that which represents reality in terms of problems faced and choices made. Low risk, however, is involved in the making of decisions, since the decision-maker does not experience traumatic effects of choices made.

Games, a fourth kind of software, emphasizes individual or small committee endeavors. In gaming procedures, the individual or the group attempts to be the winner of the game. Questions selected to respond to in the game may be easier and receive less points for correct responses. Or, learners may choose more complex questions to respond to and receive more points when responding correctly. Questions in the games should assist students to attain objectives in the geography curriculum.

In Summary

Teachers of geography need to utilize definite principles of learning to improve the curriculum. The principles of learning come from research studies in the area of educational psychology. With the

utilization of principles of learning in ongoing lessons and units, students are guided by the teacher to achieve more optimally.

Diverse philosophies of education, selected carefully by the geography teacher, may well provide a basis for rational decision making in terms of objectives, learning activities, and appraisal procedures.

Software and microcomputer use adds another dimension in terms of learning activities to provide for individual differences among students. Regardless of ability levels, each student must achieve as much as possible in the curriculum area of geography.

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