

The Humanities Curriculum Project may be regarded as a research in the problems and efforts of aspiring towards neutrality in teaching. During the sessions 1968-1969 and 1969-1970 it worked with teachers from 36 schools so they faced the problem of interpreting neutrality in practice. As a result it evolved an experimental role definition which teachers can sort.

The major interest of the Project is in the explanation of problems in the authority of teachers and schools and in particular in the authority relationship of the ~~teacher~~ ^{teacher} and students and the relationship of teacher authority to knowledge. The aim of the project was to provide stimulus, support and materials for teachers who were interested in such problems. Its context was the raising of the school leaving age, but I would claim that it has a relevance much wider than its context.

The project concentrated on teaching in the area of controversial human issues: such as the area of controversial human issues: such as war and society; education; the family; relations between the sexes;

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people and work; poverty; law and order; and living in cities. The definition of a controversial issue adopted was an empirical one: a controversial issue divides the citizenry and generates some heat, i.e. people care about it.

Care was taken to distinguish between the reasons for teaching ^{about} controversial issues with an aspiration towards neutrality and the effects of such teaching. It was suggested that teachers might wish to teach about controversial issues of universal human concern on the grounds that this was a worthwhile educational activity ~~on the grounds~~ because of the intrinsic seriousness and importance of such issues. ^{Not justified by an anticipation of effects.}

The suggested teaching aim was: 'to develop an understanding of human acts and social situations and of the controversial value issues which they raise.' I now believe that the word 'value' should be deleted since it tends to obscure the fact that many controversial issues express themselves in disputes as to the interpretation of evidence.

'Understanding' was not defined. It was held that what constitutes understanding is problematic for philosophy and that teachers would require to face this. It is not the task of a curriculum project to offer proposed

Solutions to claim philosophical problems.

Briefly, that is the argument advanced for teaching controversial issues. Why argue to neutrality in teaching them?

It was suggested that there might be a reasonable public concern ~~that~~ ^{that} the teacher ~~should~~ ^{might}

~~use~~ his authority in the classroom to promote

his own views. There may in fact be some doubt

as to whether or not he can 'moderate' at two

substructure level. Nevertheless, given that the teacher

has no firm basis for assuming parents that their

children are not influenced towards the views he

advances in the classroom, it might be reasonable

for him to be able to claim that in teaching

about controversial issues he is doing everything

he can within his technical repertoire to avoid

^{substantive} using his position of authority to shape the views

of his students.

Experience suggests and observation

has confirmed that teachers do not have the

technical skills to teach to the criterion of neutrality.

The major task and achievement of the project

has been to lay the foundations of a technique,

~~which the procedure is formed upon~~

~~a discourse in which students~~

can pursue the aim of understanding in

a discussion setting in which the teacher

adopts the procedural role of neutral chairman.

Philosophical
problems

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That is to say, he does not take sides in the discussion of a controversial issue.

This is not as simple as it sounds, for teachers do not ~~just~~ just take sides by propounding their views. And as there are no perfect performances, so no teacher can be perfectly neutral.

~~Accordingly,~~

Accordingly, I now talk to you as teachers who wish to ~~are~~ develop skill in this role and I offer you some hypotheses to test. This is just a sketch: for a fuller treatment I must refer you to the Project handbook.

I hypothesize that it will be ~~profitable~~ functional for developing the role to explain to the students and negotiate with them the aim of the teaching, ^{and} the criteria to which you are trying to work as neutral chairman. It will also be functional to point out how difficult their task and your task will be in working in this style and to invite them from time to time to discuss progress with you.

In order to develop your skills it will be necessary to ~~take~~ tape record all discussion sessions and to play back to yourself ^{at least} selected tapes.

~~Here are some examples of questions~~ ^{hypotheses}
~~you may ask yourself in monitoring your teaching.~~ ^{tests}

There are some of the questions to bear in mind when mentioning your paper, as suggested in the book

Which people take part in discussions?

Are there shared ideas about the task?

and how it should go about it?

What expectations are there about what

and feelings may or ought to be

What expectations are there about the

work it is appropriate to use.

Who's and who's not expected to

What purposes of science is intended

Is your intention over simple & un-

breaking under strain?

Are you consistent —

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On the basis of our research I now offer some ^{statements} ~~claims~~ which it will be hard for you to assess. Nevertheless, they are important to assess if the line of experiment I have been discussing is to be evaluated.

1. HCP teaching is extraordinarily difficult and at first discouraging. Tenacity and perseverance are important for achieving the role.

2. Discussion work of this sort in the last years of schooling is in a sense evaluative of what school has achieved; on the whole,

^{This evaluation} ~~It~~ is discouraging. After 10 years of schooling children are pretty articulate and they ~~know~~ know the knowledge they have acquired

3. There is positive transfer in the area of ^{his understanding} understanding of ~~subject~~ ^{his understanding} and of ^{of students} ~~of students~~; but negative transfer in the area of ^{teaching} ~~of skills~~ skills. They cannot readily be applied to the problems under discussion. They may not have been of help

4. Work of this sort has a potential to improve intelligence test scores, reading test scores and vocabulary scores. There is evidence

^{in normal reading} that the teacher's authority is reducing the cognitive attainment of at least pupils who are categorized as 'average or below average'.

5. Work of this sort ^{has a potential to} increases the self-esteem of students.

6. The skills learned by the teacher as neutral chairman transfer to an extent to other teaching settings.

7. The Project tends to suggest to students that authority should be rationally justified and this is an uncomfortable message in some schools. It can create institutional tensions.