

https://dspace.org/

If I had my way: Social studies: Much ado about nothing

1961
Johannesburg College of Education
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/25098
If I had my way: Social studies: Much ado about nothing. (1961). Symposium: A Journal for Education in Southern Africa, pp. 87-88.

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

This is not the place for a detailed or critical analysis of the syllabus, which has obviously been compiled to include a large number of representative plant and animal types in order that the pupils become acquainted with various biological phenomena, but instead of the usual frantic rush to complete all the sections—which cannot be dealt with as thoroughly as one would like — more latitude would be given to allow for the type of practical and theoretical work indicated above. Naturally, continual vigilance would have to be exercised to avoid any real digressions from the broader outlines of the syllabus, and to ensure that time is not wasted on trivial and fanciful whims of pupils.

It is amazing to see to what lengths some pupils will go, if they are interested in a particular biological phenomenon and are given the right kind of stimulation and assistance.

Practical Considerations

A method, as far as assignments go and one which I would recommend to encourage extra reading and research, is to compile a list of related topics on a particular section of the work, and then to allocate these to individual pupils or to groups of three or four. The pupils then prepare a lesson which the leader of the group will give to the remainder of the class. (Drawings on the blackboard can be done by another member of the group). At the conclusion, time is given for discussion and selection of the more important facts dealt with, and the compilation of notes and drawings. This would take up three of the six periods allocated per week to biology. The remaining three would be used for 'normal' teaching.

From the above it is clear that teachers would have to have the minimum of an Honours degree before they could hope to achieve success. There are far too many unqualified teachers of the Sciences due to the dire shortage of trained and competent science graduates.

It is only fair to say that the former teachers are doing their best, but they will be among the first to acknowledge the fact that they cannot guide pupils in the scientific method, because of their lack of background study and training.

Aspiring teachers should be encouraged to read for their Honours degree, and to those who are already teaching, I would say that every effort should be made on their part and on the part of the authorities, to allow them to have that extra year of study.

IT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

IF I HAD MY WAY

Social Studies
Much Ado About Nothing

by a "PARENT"

SO it is here to stay — an integral part of the syllabus of the T.E.D. — Social Studies — the bane of my leisure time.

Of what use educationally is this for my child? It is supposedly a means of combining both History and Geography, but all it has done for me (whilst helping out) during the past year and a half that is has been in operation has been prematurely grey hair and an urge to commit mayhem.

As I write this I can see on the table a group project for Social Studies dealing with Gold and Gold Mining. A quick glance through this imposing album and what do I see? Lovely pictures of various aspects of Gold production. Unlovely pictures of eroded sand dumps and some not so very beautiful examples of penmanship from the pupils — a faithful copy of what was explanatory text in the original brochures.

Brochures — wilfully but necessarily — cut to pieces for the purposes of the project. Nothing original from the children concerned. I lay claim to the finest collection of mutilated publications in the Transvaal. I buy liquid paste in bulk and have two pair of scissors — one in use and the other being re-ground. My life is spent on the continual prowl for magazines with pictures — particularly those appertaining to gold mining. My friends and relatives have also been brought into the act and telephone calls bring me the news that they have found something that may be of some use. I have spent hours in various

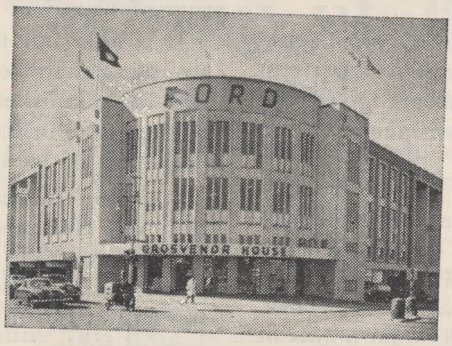
reference libraries copying out of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and other reference books assorted statstics.

Very nice for my child who, providing the work is set out neatly gets good marks but what happens if at some time or other I fail to do *my homework?* Will she fail and get poor marks and possibly a failure mark at the end of term report?

As for History and Geography as it has been known in the past, this is now obsolete in the lower standards and has to take a back seat to pasting pictures in books and copying verbatim from brochures. The History and Geography syllabus has been telescoped into the last five years of school life. Perhaps my child is fortunate in that with relatives in various parts of the world and with reference to an Atlas she knows that there are such countries as Australia, America (North and South), Great Britain and those that make up the European Continent.

As for History everything seems to start with Van Riebeeck — prior to this — a vacuum.

To sum up this parent's viewpoint: scrap Social Studies in its present form. Return to sanity via History and Geography in their old form, and give me back my leisure.



South Africa's largest Ford Dealer Organisation

SALES SERVICE PARTS

JOHANNESBURG CAPE TOWN DURBAN
EAST LONDON KRUGERSDORP

GROSVENOR FORD MOTORS LTD

The name means a good deal

GM 6019