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If I had my way: Race studies – for understanding

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For this is necessary a basic knowledge of traditional modes of living and of the conditions that have been imposed on the people by a dominant Western industrial economy, system of law, political organisation and moral codes. This can be done without excluding important knowledge of administrative and legislative developments laid down in the syllabus. If this approach were to be adopted, the existing Std. VIII text-books could be used only in a very limited way.

I realise that a great deal of this is idealistic but as one who has taught this subject since its introduction in the schools I know that the few pupils with whom this ideal even approaches achievement make its teaching a worthwhile and rewarding task.

IF I HAD MY WAY

Race Studies — for Understanding

by M. J. MALAN

IN a multi-racial South Africa it is necessary that all of us should have an objective and factual basis from which to review the problems of our society. It is difficult to break down prejudice and preconceived ideas held by individuals, but Race Studies should give pupils a knowledge of what constitutes *race* in the biological sense and *culture* in the anthropological. Through the three-year course stress should be laid on what are inborn characteristics of man, and what are acquired characteristics, in the hope that this scientific attitude may be the basis of future thinking on racial questions.

The Std. VI syllabus should start with the origin of man in Africa and the development of the main race groups in the world. Emphasis should be on the common origin and development of one species — *Homo sapiens* — before the physical differences between Caucasoids, Negroids and Mongoloids are discussed. Examples should be taken from the races found in South Africa today, and some indication should be given of how these races arrived in this country.

When pupils have become thoroughly familiar with the idea of inborn characteristics and their variations, the idea of acquired culture should be introduced, through the study of a particular Bantu tribe and our own European social group. The similarity of the culture patterns should be stressed as this forms the basis of Std. VII work.

Std. VII should deal with the fundamental patterns of culture to be found in all human societies and with the similarities and differences of the cultures found in South Africa today — from the stone age culture of the Bushmen to the Western civilisation of the European and the eastern civilisation of the Indian.

An attempt should be made to show that different races may have similar cultures and that environment and culture are inter-related.

Std. VII should try to make the pupil realise the interplay of the various cultures in the South African Scene today. The ideas of rural and urban communities, communal and capitalistic economic systems should be discussed. The industrial revolution taking place in South Africa at the moment should be dealt with as it affects all members of all races. The rise of African nationalism and freedom must also be made clear and the problems of racial psychology should be discussed with the A-stream in brief outline.

The policies of separate development of the different races in South Africa and that of integration should be explained.

This is an ambitious programme of study and must be modified to suit the abilities of the pupils. A-stream can attempt to learn far more theoretical knowledge than C-stream. I should encourage teachers to approach the subject from the angle of the Social Anthropologist and use the current text book merely to illustrate race characteristics and special social customs.

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