 Seminar Series for Middle Managers: Catering for Learner Diversity under the New Academic Structure (Part 1)

Practical Strategies for Catering for Learner Diversity: Using the Case of English Language as an Illustration

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English Language Education Section
Curriculum Development Institute
Education Bureau

Diverse Classrooms

How schools usually deal with the issue of learner diversity:

- School organisation level
  e.g. streaming, split class, separate/graded exam papers

- School curriculum level
  e.g. core & extended parts for different classes
    after-school remedial/enhancement programmes

- Class level
  e.g. graded exercises

Anything else?

How to Respond to Students’ Diverse Needs?

Understanding Students’ Learning Needs & Characteristics

- There has always been a great diversity in students’ abilities, motivation, interests, etc.
- Students’ productive skills in English, both verbal and written, need strengthening. Some students lack confidence and the language to express themselves.
- Students have different learning preferences. Some are keen on pair/group work. Some are particularly good at IT skills.

Experience Sharing

A Holistic Approach to Catering for Learner Diversity (under the NAS)

By
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Understanding Teachers’ Professional Needs

The school organised teacher professional development programmes on ‘Questioning Techniques’ & ‘Parallel Lessons’ to enhance teachers’ capacity to cater for learners’ diverse needs.

Some teachers were inexperienced and lacked the techniques in crafting good questions to scaffold/extend student learning.

The school planned to nurture a collaborative culture among teachers.

A Holistic Approach to Catering for Learner Diversity (under the NAS)

- Government Funding and Support
  - English Enhancement Scheme
  - Hiring one additional English teacher to relieve the workload of three teachers
  - forming a curriculum team

- Professional Development Opportunities
  - Courses related to ‘NSS Learning & Teaching Series’, e.g. ‘Catering for Learner Diversity in the English Language Curriculum’
  - Experience gained was shared in panel meetings/form meetings

- CDI Support
  - Joining the ‘Seed’ project as a Network School in 2008/09 and 2009/10
  - Experience gained from Secondment to CDI

A Holistic Approach to Catering for Learner Diversity (under the NAS)

Systemic Level

- Improving Pedagogy and Building up a Collaborative and Reflective Teaching Culture
  - Staff development day on ‘Questioning Techniques’
  - Collaborative lesson preparation with a focus (e.g. parallel lessons)
  - Lesson observation and peer feedback among panel members after co-planning to improve pedagogy
  - Forming a Task Force to Care for Less Advanced Students
  - ‘Project E’

- Assessment Format
  - Graded sections in assessments, e.g. containing some easier parts (about 40%) & some challenging questions
  - Separate reading papers for weaker classes

A Holistic Approach to Catering for Learner Diversity (under the NAS)

Strategic Direction and Development of the Subject

- Aligning with the school’s major concerns:
  - Using effective questioning techniques and providing constructive feedback to enhance students’ motivation and to enable them to understand how they could improve their learning

- Motivating students’ interest to use English through a variety of learning activities

- Developing students’ language skills, creativity and critical thinking skills through providing suitably-challenging tasks

- Ability grouping: 5 classes into 7 groups

Strategic Direction and Development of the Subject

- Managing learning and teaching
  - English Head Chairperson

- Leading and managing staff
  - Deployment of staff and resources

Adapted from:
Managing Learning and Teaching (I)
- Developing learning modules to allow students to recall, revisit, consolidate and extend learning experiences
- Preparing for the JS-NSS interface by integrating short stories into the JS curriculum

Managing Learning and Teaching (II)
- Setting up a pool of texts on different themes and of varied levels of difficulties for learning and teaching and allowing flexibility for teachers to select appropriate reading texts for the ‘Short Stories’ elective module
- Using a variety of learning and teaching materials and flexible grouping for the ‘Short Stories’ elective module to attend to students’ diverse needs, e.g.:
  - Visual representation
    - YouTube short story: The Monkey and the Crocodile
    - Draw a picture of what you think the setting looks like.
    - Draw a picture of what you think the main characters look like.
  - Non-print representation
    - Write a story of how the setting looks like.
    - Write a story of how the main characters look like.
- Using a variety of learning and teaching materials and flexible grouping for the ‘Short Stories’ elective module to attend to students’ diverse needs, e.g.:
  - Visual representation
    - YouTube short story: The Monkey and the Crocodile
    - Pair/Group discussion
- Non-print representation
  - Write a story of how the setting looks like.
  - Write a story of how the main characters look like.

Managing Learning and Teaching (III)
- Varying product requirements based on students’ abilities and readiness
- Collaborative lesson planning
  - Focussed
  - In line with the school development plan
- Setting the yardstick to monitor standards of learning and teaching and sharing experience after lesson observations

JS-NSS Interface in Reading Short Stories

Using Visual Representations

Leading and Managing Staff
- Development of a collaborative culture
- Staff development
  - Panel chairperson co-teaching the ‘Short Stories’ elective module (S4) with English teachers
  - Panel chairperson and service provider(s) co-teaching drama lessons (S1 - S3) with English teachers
  - Panel chairperson / a more experienced teacher teaming up with S4 & S5 teachers
Deployment of Staff and Resources

- Hiring an additional English teacher to release three English teachers for the planning and development of school-based learning and teaching resources for the NSS English Language curriculum

- Building up a resource bank of reference books, lesson plans and teaching materials to support student learning and teachers’ professional development over the past three years

An Illustration of Catering for Learner Diversity Using Multiple Strategies

To cater for learner diversity, the teachers differentiated:

- Content
- Process (Using a variety of L & T activities to suit students’ varied needs)
- Product

Differentiating Content

Focuses
- Reading skills
- Key focuses of short stories
  - Plot
  - Setting
  - Characterisation
  - Dialogue
  - Similes

Different reading texts (e.g. shorter/simplified for less advanced classes) were chosen from the selected story list with reference to students’ needs.

A Holistic Approach to Catering for Learner Diversity (under the NAS)

Systemic Level

School Organisation Level

School Curriculum Level

(Subject: English Language)

Class / Group Level

- Using a variety of suitably-challenging L & T activities to suit students’ varied needs
- Providing opportunities for peer modelling
- Providing teacher support & timely feedback

Student

Peer Modelling

Content
- Reading skills & Key Features of Short Stories
  - Revisiting basic reading skills
  - Brainstorming ideas using the five senses
  - Organising information using visualisation techniques
  - Using pictures to demonstrate learning

Process

Product

Writing a new ending for ‘Simple Peter’s Mirror’

Self-selected Texts for Further Reading

You have already read at least three short stories in this module. If you want to read more, the following website provides lots of interesting short stories. Besides, you can go to our school library to borrow the books you like as well.

1. Modern short stories:
   - www.modshort.com/index.html
   - www.modshort.com/index/index.html
   - www.modshort.com/index/index/index.html
   - www.modshort.com/index/index/index/index.html

2. Classic short stories:
   - www.modshort.com/index/index/index/index.html
   - www.modshort.com/index/index/index/index/index.html
   - www.modshort.com/index/index/index/index/index/index.html
   - www.modshort.com/index/index/index/index/index/index/index.html

I have visited __________________________ (the website you have visited) on ______ (the date) and I like the story / stories much.

______________________________

______________________________
Differentiating Product (I)

End product of Part 1:
Writing a new ending for ‘Simple Peter’s Mirror’

Product requirements varied among classes on:
- Length of writing
- Use of literary devices, e.g. dialogue and similes

Differentiating Product (II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More advanced Classes/Students</th>
<th>Less advanced Classes/Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Longer piece with more details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Features - Plot</td>
<td>Must include complication (a problem/a difficult situation)/ conflict, climax and closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary devices</td>
<td>Must include similes and dialogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Providing Opportunities for Peer Modelling (I)

Writing a new ending: ‘A Sinister Voice’ (from 4A)

- Content
  - Reading skills & Key features of Short Stories
  - Teachers’ scaffolding (e.g. Language support and timely feedback)

- Process
  - Writing a new ending for ‘Simple Peter’s Mirror’

Providing Opportunities for Peer Modelling (II)

Writing a new ending: ‘A Sinister Voice’ (from 4E)

- Discussion about the use of:
  - past tenses
  - dialogue
  - cohesive devices

Providing Teacher Support & Timely Feedback

Providing Language Support: e.g. Animal Similes

Activity 3 – My Mirror

Tell A – Animal Similes

A simile is an expression which describes a person or thing as being similar to someone or something else. Look at the following similes and fill in the blanks of animals.

E.g. as fox as a ______

1. as strong as a ______
2. as wise as an ______
3. as blind as a ______
4. as busy as a ______
5. as brave as a ______
6. as shy as a ______
7. as slippery as a ______
8. as weak as a ______
9. as proud as a ______
10. as quiet as a ______
11. as happy as a ______
12. as playful as a ______
13. as large as a ______
14. as slow as a ______
Providing Teacher Support & Timely Feedback

Breaking down tasks into manageable steps and giving students demonstrations and timely feedback:

Way Forward

Insights gained from the ‘Short Stories’ elective module (2009/10):

- Catering for learner diversity should be dealt with at JS level to ensure a smooth interface between JS and NSS.
- A clear directional school-based curriculum helps students progress through different learning stages.
- A culture of teacher collaboration should be nurtured.

Applying the experience in the planning and implementation of the school-based EL curriculum:

- Using a variety of suitably-challenging activities to motivate students and stretch their learning potentials.
- Sharing teaching experiences and ideas during collaborative lesson planning sessions.
- Developing school-based materials to cater for learner diversity.

A Holistic Approach to Catering for Learner Diversity (under the NAS)

- EES
- PDP
- ‘Seed’ Projects
- Staff development
- Staff deployment
- Whole-school approach to care for the less advanced students
- Assessment format
- Using a variety of suitably-challenging learning & teaching activities to suit students’ varied needs
- Peer modelling
- Providing language support & timely feedback
- Developing reading modules to consolidate & extend learning experiences
- JS-NSS interface
- Allowing flexibility in implementation & assessment
- Collaborative culture

Key Messages

- Strategies for Catering for Learner Diversity
  - Increasing variety in activity
  - Laying/teacher support
  - Provision of feedback
  - Teaching rich for learning deep

- A Holistic Approach to Catering for Learner Diversity (under the NAS)