

# SOME SUGGESTIONS ON THE USE OF THE COURSES OF STUDY IN SOCIAL STUDIES

FABIAN V. ABITONA

Broadly speaking, the Social Studies aim to teach human relationship.<sup>1</sup> It is an integration of all the traditional subjects hitherto known as Geography, History, Civics and Government, Health, and Character Education. Subject boundaries have been removed and all are taught as one.

## *Nature of the Work—*

In the Primary Grades, the work is largely one of habit formation through guided activities both in school and outside of it. Notice that the course of study does not specify book study for pupils, especially in the lower Primary Grades. This is because human relationships are not learned through vicarious means but more through actual participation in the learning effort.

The absence of textbooks makes it imperative that the teacher be very resourceful in the selection of materials for her activities. Such materials need not be very hard to obtain; neither do they need to be very costly. Indeed the chances are that such materials are found right in the room, even in the persons of her own children. For example, in the teaching of cleanliness, what picture can be better than the little child with the rosy cheeks right in the class, who dresses neatly, whose hair is well combed and parted, whose nails are clean, and whose appearance invites praise and commendation? In the teaching of

helpfulness, no amount of explanation can be more vivid and educative than allowing children to help Teacher carry her books, or to help make the school neat and clean, or to help an old woman cross the street. Pictures and books are of course good, to say the least. But a teacher need not fuss about the absence of this or that thing. What she needs is plenty of imagination, initiative, and resourcefulness. As much as possible, resources in the community which are available should be utilized. Songs, games, posters, cut-outs, flash strips, wooden blocks, shells, pebbles, flowers, fruits, etc., can be made or secured without an unnecessary drain on one's pocket.

In the Intermediate Grades, the work is largely observation and inferential study. Like the work in the Primary Grades, that of the Intermediate Grades is mainly a study of social relationships. While the former is somehow limited to the home and community, the latter is more or less an expansion of the study of such relationships to include the whole world. Book and map study has become important. Stories, biographies, descriptions of places, current events, historical narratives, etc., are the materials with which the interpretation of relationships are brought about.

## *Treatment of Subject Matter—*

As we said, social studies teach desirable human relationships. This means that children should be led to

<sup>1</sup> Wesley, Edgar Bruce and Adams. *Mary A. Teaching the Social Studies in the Elementary Schools*. p. 17.

discover that they are members of a group, that one works, plays, and lives with another; that all share in the responsibility as well as in the enjoyment of the products of the communal effort. What is to be avoided is the mere verbose repetition of things. For example, a child should not only be able to say correctly, "I brush my teeth everyday", "I wash my hands before eating and after the toilet", or "I help my mother take care of the baby", etc., but also he should be able to produce the proof that he did brush his teeth, that he did wash his hands, etc. In other words, the thing that matters is not what one says, but what he actually does. This does not mean, however, that there will be less talking activity. There should be plenty of it. There must be plenty of oral expressions, but most of them must be the result or the accompaniment of the learning activity itself.

Notice that the subject matter under each unit is a broad one that allows for broad interpretation. For purposes of teaching, the teacher should be able to subdivide the units into smaller units that can be conveniently handled at any one time or length of time.

#### *Methods and Procedures—*

In Grades I and II where the children do not have enough vocabulary to express themselves unaided, the procedure must of course be largely one of doing under guidance. Children play they are helping Mother take care of the house, cook the rice, or set the table. They pretend to go to school, meet and help an old woman across the street, observe safety rules, or greet someone correctly. They sing songs and recite poems; they study and imitate health practices, or observe and judge for themselves who is the heal-

thiest boy or girl in the class. They learn to help each other, and learn to feel as one. They learn the names of each other, or the places where they live, of the barrios or communities around their own, etc. To little children, nothing is so much more interesting than themselves. It is therefore necessary that they should be identified with the activities they perform or talk about.

Care should be taken that children do not go through an activity as a matter of course. Learning is made only when there is a whole-hearted and vigorous response. Neither should the activity be the whole thing. The activity is only a means to an end, and that end is learning. It may be in the form of habits, skills, knowledges, or attitudes.

The Course of Study suggests activities for the accomplishment of the objectives of each unit. These are not given to be religiously followed. They are mere guides. Some such activities may be taken, modified, or adapted to suit local conditions.

In Grades III and IV, where the study becomes more or less formal and complex, where the child begins to enlarge his horizon, the study naturally could not be limited to activities strictly of the performance type. Children by this time are mature enough to make closer observation of the life around them. They can see more or less clearly how people generally help each other, how they are fed and sheltered, how different people earn their living, etc. By this time, they have become conscious of some form of authority. They can see how Father manages their family's business, how Mother manages the home, how the policeman keeps order, or the priest leads people to prayer. They more or less recognize the necessity of some

forms of regulations or laws to keep peace and order. Observation of such things as these are necessary. Children may be allowed to see for themselves how the community is managed. They may be held to ask information from their parents, from their elders, or from people in the community regarding life in their community. An excursion to places of interest in the community should be available of wherever possible. Such excursions, to be fruitful, must be motivated and guided; otherwise, nothing profitable can come out of them. Children should know what to see, why such places visited are of interest, how people feel towards them and why, etc. These excursions should be followed by a discussion and a check-up on what had been observed. Failure to do this defeats the whole purpose. It is of great importance to remember that the discussion should not degenerate into mere formal enumeration of things. What is needed is the development of the emotional or attitudinal element — an understanding and appreciation of their significance.

In the Intermediate Grades, the procedure should be more varied with the pupils having more share in the learning activity. Notice that the present Course of Study differs from that previously issued to the field. The former does not have detailed questions such as the Work and Study Sheets which accompanied the latter. There are some check-up questions though, but they are not so detailed as they were before. This is because our concepts of the Social Studies have changed to some extent from mere mastery of information to understanding of their social significance.

Thus we have come to replace our Morrissonian Mastery Technique with some other methods that lend them-

selves readily to the development of interests and attitudes. Our objectives are no longer in terms of subject matter but of interests and attitudes — objectives which are more human and more in keeping with the tendency to establish mutual understanding and appreciation of the interrelationship of peoples in the world.

When is a method good in the teaching of the Social Studies? A good teacher usually can teach effectively with the use of a combination of methods. No one is sure as to what the precise procedures should be. In fact, the Course of Study does not provide nor even suggest any specific method to be used. As the teaching of the Social Studies as a means of bringing about the development of social attitudes hinges upon the teacher's ability to inject the personal element in the activity, the prescription of specific methods would only tend to make the activity itself stereotyped and mechanical instead of being fluid and spontaneously alive.

The writer, however, is of the belief that the problem method of discussion is one that lends readily to the development of reasoning. Through problems, cause and effect relationships can be portrayed or brought about with relative ease. In fact, many of the suggested activities in the Course of Study are either in the form of problems or ones that could be easily raised as such.

One thing we should remember in the Social Studies recitation is the avoidance of too many factual questions. Questions like, "What and where is Arayat?", "Define a plateau", "When and by whom was Cebu founded?", are more or less stereotyped questions that do not develop one's reasoning power nor develop his interest and attitude. Now compare them

with the following:

How does Mt. Arayat affect the people of Pampanga?

Of what value is a plateau? Does it do any one good? Why or why not?

Why was the founding of Cebu important to the Filipinos? This does not mean, of course, doing away completely with factual questions. They certainly are of value in rounding out subordinate ideas to a given controversial question.

*Evaluation or Testing  
the Results of Instruction—*

A good teacher wants to find out what progress she has made in her work. In other words, she needs to measure how much her children have learned about something during a certain period of time. In the lower grades where the aims are largely the development of habits, interests and attitudes, there should be less formal testing or testing in terms of the mastery of subject matter. Habits and attitudes are spontaneous behavior built through many satisfying experiences. They are best measured through personal observation and subjective evaluation. A good teacher should be able to discern how pupils behave or react to certain situations calling for certain types of responses. Pencil-and-paper tests may be used, but care should be taken that said tests do not merely test verbal memory.

In the upper grades, where the learning horizon has been considerably enlarged and where more vicarious study is undertaken, testing may be given in the form of problem situations, associations, judgment questions, reasoning, and the like. Examples:

A. *Types of problem situations—*

Give the correct answers. Be pre-

pared to prove your reasons orally.

1. The municipality of Cortes has a small territory. The population is small. The soil is poor and the land surface is hilly. What do you think the people of Cortes do to earn a living?

2. Cebu is one of the most thickly populated provinces in the Philippines. The island is hilly. The soil is thin and coralline. The rainfall is light. What farm products are likely to be grown?

3. During the Spanish regime, why were Filipinos unhappy?

B. *Association—*

Write on the blanks all the words in the right column that belong in the group at the left.

1. *Health—*

- |          |                 |
|----------|-----------------|
| a. _____ | smoking         |
| b. _____ | doctor          |
| c. _____ | sleep           |
| d. _____ | drinking liquor |
| e. _____ | exercise        |

2. *Malolos Congress—*

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| a. _____ | Paterno   |
| b. _____ | Calderon  |
| c. _____ | Barasaoín |
| d. _____ | Bonifacio |
| e. _____ | Quezon    |

3. *Philippine Exports—*

- |          |       |
|----------|-------|
| a. _____ | milk  |
| b. _____ | copra |
| c. _____ | silk  |
| d. _____ | abaca |

C. *Judgment Questions—*

Check the correct answers. Be prepared to prove your answers orally after the test.

1. Children should go to sleep early because:

- They are young.
- They need more sleep.
- They are growing slow.
- Sleep makes one healthy.

2. Ilocanos emigrate to other places in the Philippines because:

- They are home loving.
- They have a long dry season in the Ilocos.
- The population is dense.
- They love to travel.
- The land is not fertile.

3. The opening of the Suez Canal led to the development of industries in the Philippines because of:

- Spain's restrictive commercial policy.
- The shortening of the distance from the Philippines to Mexico.
- European markets were made available to the products of the Islands.
- Basco's economic policy.
- The influence of the friars on the civil authorities.

D. Reasoning Questions—

Give your reasons why the following should be done:

1. A child should love and respect his teachers, parents and elders.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. We should pay our taxes promptly.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

3. We should obey the laws.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

As in the Primary Grades, the aims in the Intermediate Grades revolve around the development of interests and attitudes. Subject matter has become a tool. For this reason, the emphasis has been shifted from the mere mastery of information to the development of reasoning and appreciation. Objective tests are still of value, but only to the extent that they promote rather than hinder them.



"US" . . . (Continued from page 54)

ing me so well. I'd lose my left arm before I could willfully disappoint him.

These, then, are the peculiar conditions of my return to "the land of my birth." It is a rare opportunity to pay in goodness and service what good I got from the native land. I do not expect to grow rich here, nor even to

be merry, but I do not expect to get the deepest satisfaction of my life — that I am given such rare opportunity to serve where I never served before. This is my compensation for the loss of the many friends I had. This is my compensation for reduced comforts and cultural contacts. It may well be of the most lasting satisfaction to US.