

Comparative Study of Problem-Solving Approaches on Development Education Modules to Two Cohorts of Potential Second-Level Teachers

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Aims

- The primary aim of this project was to use **problem-solving approaches** to generate deeper learning and critical engagement with **development issues** amongst students who will potentially teach SPHE, Home Economics, CSPE and the new Sociological and Political Studies programme for Senior Cycle.
- A secondary aim was to interrogate how the contrasting **institutional cultures** of the Bachelor of Education programme in St. Angela's and the Sociology Dept in UCC impacted on the pedagogical approaches and philosophical paradigms which underpinned their experience of each programme.

Methodology

Drew upon two concepts:

- The effectiveness of **narrative** as a means of investigating the internalisation of habitus (Bordieu)
- **Activity Theory** (Engström) to examine the process of enculturation or learning to be in the Institutional context

A similar **Problem Based Learning (PBL)** approach was implemented over a one-year period with each cohort and students' responses/views were elicited via reflective **portfolios** (St. Angela's College) and via **questionnaires** and **focus group** (UCC). Lecturers' responses were documented via reflective portfolio.

Participants

Two undergraduate cohorts taking development education modules, one offered by the Dept. of Education, St. Angela's College Sligo and the other by the Dept. of Sociology, UCC and their respective lecturers.

Findings

...in relation to Pedagogical Approach

- Both cohorts of students **enjoyed** the active participatory approaches used but cited **frustration** at the lack of time set aside to complete tasks and to the extent that guidance was given in relation to tasks as opposed to direction.
- In both instances there was evidence of enhanced **critical engagement** which was reflected in the coursework of each cohort, yet in the case of St. Angela's, it could not be attributed solely to the use of PBL.



Image Source: www.developmenteducation.ie



Cartoon Source: www.developmenteducation.ie

...in relation to Institutional Culture

- Both the **philosophical perspectives** and **historicity** of both programmes were evident throughout the analysis process in particular in light of the roles, rules and tools utilised throughout the activity of the programmes. In relation to roles, the students identified themselves in light of their perceived identities, mainly that of socially aware and active citizens in the case of UCC and of socially aware teachers in the case of St. Angela's College. The role of teacher was primarily perceived of as innovator and change agent within the classroom.
- It became evident that the tools used such as selected literature, teaching methodologies reflected the explicit and implicit object of each of the programmes that is to produce **socially active citizens** and to produce socially aware and socially active teachers.