

# Edu100 artefact analysis

Business



What does it mean to be a teacher in the 21st century? Schoolteachers provide students with education and preparation for adulthood. However, what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century is rife with ambiguity.

An analysis of educational artefacts will aid in answering this question. One is a system-level document titled Closing the Gap (Appendix A), while the other is a school-level document outlining the homework guidelines at Siena Catholic College (Appendix B).

Discussion on these documents will relate to one of four educational discourses and the effects of policies on students, teachers and the schooling milieu. The four educational discourses include academic rationalism, social and economic efficiency, child centred learning, and social reconstruction (Morris, 1998, p. 12).

The Department of Education and Training produced the document Closing the Gap in July 2009. This document outlines an initiative to reduce Indigenous disadvantages under the pretence of education as a dominant catalyst for improved health and personal human capital.

Ross & Wu (1995, p. 719) advocate this pretence, stating ‘ high educational attainment improves health directly, and it improves health indirectly through work and economic conditions, social-psychological resources, and health lifestyle’. Halving the gap for Indigenous reading, writing, numeracy, and Year 12 attainment within a decade is the predominant goal for the Closing the Gap scheme. Essentially then, a discourse of social reconstruction underpins this document, as it focuses on community interaction, injustices, social problems and inequalities.

Generally, the policies introduced enforce a foundation of inclusivity and anti-discrimination in the actions of teachers. The effects on students, however, will be more profound. Higher levels of education bring wealth and changes in social class, which in turn allows resources for further education (Orr, 2003, p. 282). This will narrow the social classes between students, encouraging collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Although a discourse of social reconstruction is prevalent throughout this document, some policies that are introduced are based on other discourses.

Academic rationalism is another discourse that can be associated with the policies in Closing the Gap. The ' Deadly Maths' initiative encourages high expectations of attendance, behaviour and performance to raise numeracy education outcomes for Indigenous students. This policy aims to improve schoolteacher understanding of the nature and pedagogy of mathematics, particularly the role of symbols and pattern recognition. It also aims to improve the teachers understanding of the nature and pedagogy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture, language, and out of school life.

Initially, this may seem unrelated to mathematics, or any academic discipline.

However, teachers are not removed from traditions other than science, that is, rational inquiry and the search for truth. As Moran (2005) states, ' An historian or a sociologist who is ignorant of religion will be hampered within his or her own field of scholarship. The classroom is not a place for proselytising but the traditions of the students deserve respect and the tradition of the teacher needs acknowledgment'.

Differences in literacy and numeracy levels between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students were revealed through NAPLAN and will continue to be tested this way in the future. This method of testing can be attributed to the academic rationalist educational discourse and can be detrimental to achieving the goals and ideals detailed throughout this document. ‘ The potentially destructive affects of such data on school, teachers’ and students’ self-esteem was suggested as a real negative of NAPLAN for Indigenous students’ (Lingard, 2011, p.

230).

Ironically, the use of these tests is in opposition to a discourse of social reconstruction, the discourse which underpins the entirety of Closing the Gap. ‘ From a social constructivist perspective, five explanations for the literacy achievement gap appear plausible: linguistic differences, cultural differences, discrimination, inferior education, and rationales for schooling’ (Au, 1998, p. 297). Au’s last three explanations given are now in the process of rectification. However, English is a second language for many rural Indigenous students, giving them an immediate disadvantage in IQ and NAPLAN tests.

Figuroa & Garcia (1994, p. 10) state that tests and testing need to be racially and culturally non-discriminatory and should be provided in the primary language. If NAPLAN is used to measure the gap in literacy and numeracy skills, an overwhelming burden will be placed on schoolteachers. Indigenous parents will be encouraged to speak in English to their children from birth in order to close the gap, eventually leading to the abolishment of

their native language. Alternatively, NAPLAN tests can be available in the native language.

In this scenario, schoolteachers will be required to learn the native language; otherwise large numbers of teachers who are proficient in the native language will need to be trained. Another educational discourse presented in this document is one of social and economic efficiency. Closing the Gap also introduces some policies based on a discourse of social and economic efficiency. An example of this is the introduction of wraparound support for Indigenous school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SATs).

These services assist in the participation and completion of SATs, mentoring, and successful transitions from school to employment or further training. This can be categorised into the social and economic efficiency discourse, as it focuses on current and future labour needs.

This discourse adopts a ‘hands-on’ approach for students, expanding on vocational knowledge and skills. Teachers play a major role in the advertising of such services and the modification of curriculum and co-curricular activities for students participating in SATs. When detailing their research, Smith ; Wilson (2002, p. 7) reported that ‘more than half of the students had learned about the school-based new apprenticeship through school, either through a teacher or co-ordinator (58%) or from a notice board at school (6. 7%)’.

These services positively impact on students, particularly those at risk of becoming socially isolated or disengaging from school. When speaking on students who are unlikely to pursue a bachelor’s degree, Bishop (1995, p.

14) states that ‘ at-risk students should be advised to start building their foundation of occupational skills and knowledge while they are still in school’.

Another policy presented in this document may also have a positive impact on Indigenous students. The ‘ Flexible Alternative Learning Program’ presented in Closing the Gap is designed for students who are at-risk of separating themselves from school. This program delivers culturally relevant and capability appropriate curriculum, whether vocational or academic.

The full range of student needs will be addressed, including basic material needs, travel requirements, health and nutrition and personal support requirements.

This initiative is based on a child centred learning discourse as it focuses on the individual, providing opportunities for personal growth. However, all four educational discourses characterise different areas of this program. This program will allow students with special needs to have more time with teachers, ensuring teachers maintain a caring and nurturing environment. However, to further clarify the role of teachers in the 21st century, another document will be analysed.

Siena Catholic College produced the document Homework Guidelines in 2007.

This document outlines what homework is, why it is necessary, the amount of homework given, and categorises the different types of homework. This document introduces homework with two definitions; as a method of consolidating or preparing for class studies, and as formal assessment that <https://assignbuster.com/edu100-artefact-analysis/>

may be completed using both class time and time outside normal lessons. Against this first definition, Otto (1957, p. 367) states, ‘ homework is not significantly related to achievement as measured by teacher marks or standardized tests’.

However, many academics praise homework. Goldstein (1960, p. 22) believes that authors have a tendency to frame their conclusions of the values of homework in terms that favour preconceived notions about homework and for subsequent authors to cite these unfavourable conclusions rather than the actual research findings. The second definition given in this document is founded in a discourse of academic rationalism, where teachers test students on their ability to complete set tasks. This discourse can affect students negatively, giving those with more resources, such as access to tutors, ICT’s, and textbooks, a distinct advantage.

Also, teachers should be cautious when conducting this form of assessment, as plagiarism can occur when students are not under direct supervision of the teacher.

Although academic rationalism may impact negatively on teachers and students, other discourses presented in this document will not. A discourse of social and economic efficiency is prevalent throughout this document. The document praises homework for fostering good learning habits, self-discipline, planning, organising, ICT skills, resource collection and multimedia knowledge.

These tacit skills can be utilised in many career pathways. Teachers have a duty to foster these skills in students, ensuring the homework tasks address these skills.

Teachers also have an obligation to facilitate the acquisition of these skills, enforcing the use of planners such as diaries or timetables. As well as this discourse, social reconstruction is portrayed throughout the homework guidelines. An educational discourse of social reconstruction is apparent in this document.

The document states that homework strengthens the partnership between home and school, providing parents with insights as to what is being taught. This encourages cooperation between schoolteachers and parents, especially when resources such as ICTs are not available to the student outside of school.

Students are also encouraged to balance homework with family, social, work and extracurricular activities. This promotes collaborative learning and community interaction, which are also categorised under a discourse of social reconstruction.

Lastly, the child centred discourse is also contextualised within this document. Homework Guidelines states that homework provides an opportunity for students to be responsible for their own learning. According to this document, homework also challenges gifted students to explore open-ended tasks, developing self-learning and independent inquiry.

This quasi-acceleration rescues talented students from the boredom of insufficient challenges, helping them to develop better study habits and

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more realistic self-concept (Kulik ; Kulik, 1984, p. 10). This teaching method is based on a child centred discourse. In taking this discourse to its extreme, teachers may set different homework tasks for each student according to their aptitude and future prospects. What it means to be a teacher in the 21st century is still to be determined.

However, an answer to this question has been attempted through the use of academic artefacts which summarise policies and procedures at both the school and system level. The Department of Education and Training developed the document, Closing the Gap, which outlines initiatives to narrow the academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. As this document focuses on community interaction, injustices, social problems and inequalities, it is based on a discourse of social reconstruction. This document delves into other discourses however, with the ‘ Deadly Maths’ and ‘ Parents as First Teachers’ initiatives being founded on a discourse of academic rationalism. The use of NAPLAN for testing students also falls under this category.

A discourse of social and economic efficiency is portrayed in the use of SATs and the ‘ Flexible Alternative Learning Program’ presents a child centred approach.

The homework guidelines at Siena Catholic College are also embedded within the four discourses. Although the testing of students on homework is based on an academic rationalist discourse and may produce negative results, the tacit skills and knowledge gained from independent study can be applicable to many career pathways. The document outlines other positive

outcomes of homework, such as parent-teacher interaction, and the challenging of gifted students.

These policies and discourses may affect the teacher's inclusiveness, knowledge of other languages and traditions, knowledge of alternative educational pathways, ability to cater for those with special needs, understanding of resource limitations, fostering of work habits, ability to talk to parents, and development of aptitude based homework. Reference List Au, K 1998, Social constructivism and the school literacy: Learning of students of diverse backgrounds, Vol.

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