

SUBJECT: Education

Course: UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNER

PROGRAMME: Primary Education (to include Early Childhood/Special Education/Secondary)

YEAR/SEMESTER: 2/1

PRE-REQUISITES: The Emergent Teacher,
The Teacher, The School & The Society

DURATION: 60 hours (4 credits)

Course Description

This course has been developed to provide the opportunity for student teachers to recognize and think reflectively about the various psychological and sociological factors that impact on the development of the learner. The course is arranged in four units. Unit One looks at the learner as an individual. Unit 2 examines the impact and influence of family, peers, and secondary social groups on the learner. In Unit 3, student teachers are asked to think about the role they play in socializing the learner within the context of the school-its physical environment, group processes, and curriculum. Student teachers are also given the opportunity in Unit 4, to focus on understanding the developmental needs of exceptional learners.

Introduction: This is an introductory course aimed at helping student teachers to become cognizant of, and to understand the various genetic and environmental factors that can influence the growth and development of the learner. Student teachers are introduced to scientific theories about growth, psychological theories of development and sociologically based ideas about the effect of schooling, group processes and other social factors, on the learner. Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on helping student teachers to develop observation and interview skills as a foundation for constructing experiential knowledge about the students they teach, so that they can apply their formal knowledge of the learner in more meaningful ways. Opportunities are provided for student teachers to engage in reflection, both formally and informally, about what they are learning in each course unit. It is recommended that emphasis in any unit can be dependent on student teacher's areas of specialization such as Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education.

Rationale:

The period of childhood through adolescence involves many changes in growth and development that are the result of both genetic and environmental factors. These affect the readiness and ability of students to learn. It is therefore critical that teachers develop knowledge and understanding of the expected patterns of human growth and development and the various environmental factors that can aid or limit them. A teacher who has this type of knowledge is better prepared to understand the learners that he/she is asked to teach, and will therefore be better prepared to plan and implement effective and sensitive teaching strategies.

This course seeks to provide student teachers with the knowledge, skills and experiences that will enable them to understand the learner they will teach. It is hoped the skills to recognize and understand the general and individual developmental needs of their students, as well as the willingness to apply this understanding to the process of planning and engaging in teaching that is developmentally sensitive and appropriate.

One of the general aims of this course is to help student teachers appreciate the impact that they will have as teachers on the development of their learners. The course aims to help them to become reflective about the roles that teachers can play as agents of socialization in the classroom, and as facilitators in helping their students to cope with social and cultural factors such as family, peers, church, social groups, the media that also affect the learner.

In keeping with this objective, it is expected that student teachers will become cognizant and reflective about specific social issues that impact on learners in Jamaican schools, such as gender, race, religious and class stereotyping and marginalization, disrespect for the rights of children, and insensitivity to the rights and needs of learners with special needs.

Aims:

Student teachers will become familiar with scientific and psychological theories of growth and development. They will also develop an appreciation for the importance of trying to understand the role of social and economic factors in the development of the learner, and the usefulness of this type of understanding for their success as teachers of diverse learners in the classroom.

Objectives:

Objectives for the course are presented in each unit below.

Pedagogical Orientation of the Course

It is an interesting period in the history of Teacher Education programs in our colleges. The delivery modes once used are now facing challenges given the kind of revolution that is taking place in the new curriculum introduced in our school system. The introduction of this new curriculum is asking lecturers to adjust their pedagogical thoughts to meet the changing needs of the learning.

The phenomenological foundation on which this course is designed is based on the perception that knowledge and skills must be delivered *using participatory active teaching strategies*. Lecturers are expected to practice the constructivist approach in their delivery of the course so that student teachers have a chance to see and model this approach in action.

Relationship to Practicum

Developing observation instruments, observing in classrooms, developing interview schedules, conducting interviews, developing strategies for teaching and learning that are developmentally appropriate. Examination of personal and other people's biases, beliefs, stereotypes held about gender, race, SES, class, learning problems and developing strategies for addressing these in classrooms with students.

COURSE ASSESSMENT: FIVE ASSIGNMENTS WORTH 20% EACH

ASSESSMENT

There is no formal examination for this course. The scheme of assessment is based on Course assignments as set out below:

1. Unit One

Observational Study – Students are asked to produce a report that documents and discusses their observation of one selected student. The objectives of this assignment are to help student teachers

- Apply their knowledge of theories of growth and development to their observations of students with whom they work
- Practice skills of formal observation of students
- Recognize that there are many variations in levels of growth and development in each grade of students
- Recognize the importance of planning lessons that will be sensitive to and accommodate the needs of such variations

Guidelines for Assessment

Report of Observation (inclusive of description of classroom environment)	10 marks
Links to Theories of Growth and Development	6 marks
Observational Instrument and Field Notes	2 marks
Use of Language	2 marks

It is suggested that observations be conducted while students are out on teaching practice so that they can observe children over a period of time.

NB. Students should ensure the confidentiality of their report by using pseudonyms. Reports should **NOT** include photographs, copies or originals of personal documents, school reports. Students are encouraged to secure the consent of parents before undertaking observations.

2. Unit Two

Community Profile – Students are asked to present a written report on a community. It is recommended that this assignment be done in groups. The objectives of this assignment are to help student teachers.

- Make links between community factors and the development and progress of learners in a school
- Recognize various factors that may affect learners in communities such as
 - Geographical factors like location, terrain, climate, infrastructure, population, services

Guidelines for Assessment

This assignment can take the form of a display OR presentation that acts as teaching/learning tools for other students. Lecturers should encourage students to use their knowledge of ICT to produce presentations using various media.

Content	10 marks
Presentation	6 marks
Peer Assessment	4 marks

Assignment Five – Portfolio

Students are asked to do a portfolio that demonstrates their ongoing critical reflections and personal experiences with each unit of the course. Suggestions for portfolio contents include (but are not restricted to):

- Five reflective essays – one on each unit, and a final piece
- Artifacts, critical writings (think pieces, poems) that document “My Philosophy of Teaching – How it changed as I did the U TL course”

It is suggested that portfolios **do not** exceed twenty-five pages in length. The objective of this assignment is to encourage students to reflect critically on the course and to develop their skills of articulating their feelings, views, ideas in concrete ways. The assignment should emphasize the student teacher’s growing awareness of the importance of Understanding the Learner as a key ingredient in the formula for becoming a good teacher.

Guidelines for Assessment

Entries	2 marks
Reflections	12 marks
Presentation (organization, language, creativity)	6 marks

Guidelines for Assessment were developed collaboratively by lecturers from all the teachers colleges in an effort to ensure parity. Lecturers are however, free to develop their own schemes for assessment. If they choose to do so, they **MUST** have them available for purposes of moderation.

- Socio-economic factors such as types of employment, income levels, occupations, social and political composition and political composition of population.
 - Develop sensitivity to the impact of these factors on schools and their learners
 - Recognize the impact of community factors on the work of the teacher as he/she tries to address the needs of learners

Guidelines for Assessment

Identify Community Factors (at least 4)	2 marks
Discussion and Analysis of Factors	10 marks
Instrument and Field Notes	4 marks
Peer Assessment	2 marks
Use of Language	2 marks

Students can focus on a single school and its community OR they can focus on a community and the school within it. This assignment offers students the opportunity to practice skills of collaboration and group work. Reports should ideally be between twenty to thirty pages (including appendices with research instruments etc).

3. Unit 3

Individual Essay – Students are asked to write an essay on any topics assigned by lecturer on Unit three. It is suggested that essay topics encourage research, analysis and evaluation of issues, arguments, strategies re The Role of the Teacher in facilitating Appropriate Growth and Development of Learners.

Guidelines for Assessment

Assessment criteria will depend on specific task given by colleges. It is suggested that emphasis be placed on evaluating students' research and writing skills.

4. Unit 4

Group Research and Presentations on Learners with Special Needs –

Students are asked to work in groups to prepare presentations that highlight various groups of special needs. Presentation should demonstrate that students

- Have conducted research about special needs
- Have developed sensitivity to issues re teaching special needs students
- Have constructed a basic understanding of accommodations that can be made for special needs students in classrooms
- Are aware of the importance of facilitating tolerance and respect for the rights of special needs students

UNIT 1: Understanding the Learner as an individual

Number of Hours: 20

Instructional Objectives:

1. Become familiar with the normal pattern of physical development, and the factors that affect this
2. Be cognizant of the stages of cognitive, identity, psychological, and moral, development as suggested by theorists such as Piaget, Erickson, Freud and Kohlberg
3. Read and discuss a case study of learner behavior in a classroom setting
4. Develop a simple observation schedule for use with learners in a classroom
5. Design and prepare charts that summarize and compare theories of development as a study aid
6. Do observations of learners to assess stages of growth and development
7. Be able to interpret observational data by applying knowledge of developmental and growth theories.

CONTENT	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
1.1. Course Outline and objectives of the course	Discuss the rationale, aims and objectives of the course and requirements for successful completion.
1.2. Definition of terms “Growth” and “Development”	Brainstorm ideas about growth and development using personal experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Viewing of videos depicting human growth and development
1.3. Normal Stages of Physical Growth Factors that affect physical growth- genetics, nutrition, hygiene, nurturing	Preparation of Charts/Posters that show stages of growth and development (to aid with understanding of concepts and as a learning tool for developing study aids)
1.4. Theories of Development and development perspectives – cognitive, moral, intellectual, Piaget, Freud, Kohlberg, Erickson etc.	Class discussions of these stages/perspectives
1.5. Doing a Case Study <ul style="list-style-type: none">- purpose of doing a case study- reading case studies	Students are given examples of case studies to read and discuss Issues include <ul style="list-style-type: none">-purpose and usefulness of doing case Studies-relevance of teaching-conduct of observers in field,

<p>-developing a simple observation schedule</p> <p>-observing and recording data of children's behavior, appearance, physical development, in classroom situations as a means of identifying developmental stages</p> <p>-writing up a report, including brief account of where, when, how long observations were made, specifics of subjects observed – age, gender</p> <p>-issues of confidentiality</p>	<p>ensuring confidentiality</p> <p>Students shown ways of making observational field notes, and constructing observation schedules that identify observational focus e.g. recording one child's activity in the classroom every five minutes. What to look for when observing</p> <p>Students asked to visit a classroom to observe a student, using pre developed observation schedule (no more than two hours) and record data.</p> <p>Students produce individual written report of observations</p>
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Assessment Exercise: Written Report of Observational Study (20%)

Standards

Students can:

1. Identify and describe stages of physical growth and factors that affect physical development
2. List and describe the stages of cognitive, identify, psychological, and moral, development as suggested by theorists such as Piaget, Erickson, Freud and Kohlberg
3. Read, analyze and discuss a case study of learner behavior in a classroom setting, using terms and concepts from development theories

Unit 2: Socialization of the Learner: The Influence of Home and Community

Number of Hours: 15 hours

Instructional Objectives:

Student teachers should:

1. Identify and describe social factors that influence growth and development
2. Analyze data sources for information on “home” factors that influence learning and achievement
3. Describe differences in family types and parenting styles
4. Evaluate the role of secondary groups in learner socialization
5. Set up and conduct interviews to gather data for community profiles
6. Determine various factors that lead to differences between communities
7. Explain the effects of these differences on learners
8. Work in groups to collect and analyze data from interviews and from other data resources

CONTENT	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
<p><i>1.1 The family and its Role in development of the learner</i></p> <p>The impact of factors such as family type, child-rearing practices, parenting styles, SES, geographical location etc, on learners growth and development. How these influence development of self concept and self esteem, and learning, growth and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -family types – two parents, single parent, extended, absent parents, teenage parent, non-traditional families -child-rearing practices, parenting styles-authoritarian, authoritative, Laissez-faire <p><i>1.2. The Role of Secondary Groups in development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -identification and examination of institutions and social groups that influence learner development such as Church (Religion) Clubs (Scouts, Girl Guides, 4H Clubs, Youth Groups Sports Activities/clubs. YMCA 	<p>Lecturer presents case study samples, statistical tables, charts, journal articles to highlight effects of various ‘home’ factors on learning and achievement of Jamaican students.</p> <p>Students and lecturers discuss and analyze.</p> <p>Students can be asked to produce written analyses of materials</p> <p>Students placed in groups to do community profiles. Each group member asked to conduct interview with one community member – students, teachers, parents, police officers, church pastor, principals, social workers, social activity coordinators (scouts, coaches etc), health clinic workers</p>

<p>Responses Thanking interviewees by letter Issues of confidentiality and trust</p>	<p>-students asked to generate written group report on their chosen community using interview data.</p> <p>Lecturers could highlight topical issues such as differences according to community in teenage pregnancy rates, school girls and taxi drivers, incidence of HIV, etc., and use these to generate discussions about how these may impact on the learner in school and at home</p> <p>Students asked to make group presentations of community profiles. Discussions to identify common/different factors, themes etc. about role of community, social groups etc.</p>
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Assessment: Community Profiles (20%)

Standards

Students can:

4. Explain the meanings of terms such as: family types, child rearing practices, parenting styles, socio-economic status, secondary social groups, peer group, community profile, infrastructure, statistics
5. Demonstrate understanding of the significance of taking social factors such as family type, parenting styles, socio-economic status, secondary groups, peer groups into account when trying to understand the learner
6. Analyze case studies of learners and their progress in different communities
7. Describe how knowledge of differences in community factors can be used in planning for and teaching the learner.

UNIT 3: Understanding the Learner at School. The Role of the Teacher

Number of Hours: 12

Instructional Objectives:

Student Teachers should:

1. Use observational and interview data to develop knowledge of social relations in classrooms
2. Examine and practice strategies for conflict resolution in classrooms

3. Examine and reflect on their own attitudes towards authority
4. Examine and reflect on their own attitudes towards issues of difference (gender, sexuality, race, SES, religion etc.) in classrooms
5. Examine government policies on issues of differences in schools
6. Explore strategies for fostering healthy relationships in classrooms
7. Formulate opinions about the role of the teacher in educating for values and attitudes
8. Identify examples of cases where the rights of children are violated
9. Identify ways of helping children whose rights are violated
10. Identify elements of classrooms that are safe developmentally appropriate

CONTENT	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
<p>3.1 The role of the Teacher in facilitating growth and Development of the Learner</p> <p>a) Fostering healthy relationships in the classroom</p> <p>Conflict resolution</p> <p>b) Development of Values and Attitudes</p>	<p>Students asked to do 2 to 3 classroom observations (same class) to see how learners interact with the teacher and each other. Students can interview the teacher and students to ask deeper questions about classroom interactions. Written reports of observations could include conclusions about the type of relationships that exist in the classroom, why they exist , how these affect learning, and recommendations for improvement</p> <p>Examination of Pals Jamaica Handbook for handling Student Conflict</p> <p>Students can write and dramatize scripts that show classroom conflict and conflict resolution. This exercise give students an opportunity to practice conflict resolution skills.</p> <p>Students could complete personality questionnaires to determine their attitudes to authority, core values etc.</p>

<p>-examining one's attitudes and values with respect to authority</p> <p>-Examining one's attitudes and values with respect for individual differences</p> <p>- Fostering tolerance, respect in the Classroom</p> <p>-Examining the issue of how far the teacher should go in fostering values and attitudes beyond the classroom</p> <p>c. Protecting the rights of the child UN. Declaration of the Rights of Children -identifying cases where children's rights are being violated</p>	<p>Discussion/Class Debates on questions such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -should students' respect for the teacher be expected or should it be earned? <p>Students draw on their recent observation exercise to pinpoint examples of students who were 'different' because of religion, race, SES, sexual orientation, size, physical, mental disability, and discuss their feelings towards these students.</p> <p>Examination of Ministry of Education and Culture's policies re difference e.g the treatment of Rastafarian children in schools – public and private</p> <p>Students asked to develop a plan for fostering tolerance and respect in the classroom. Plan could include specific strategies such as establishing better understanding of cultural differences, developing behavioural guidelines for ensuring tolerance and respect, helping students to recognize and accept that everyone has feelings that can be hurt such as role playing, sharing of cultural knowledge and events etc, social activities.</p> <p>Students can revisit the article "The Teacher's Awesome Power: Possible topics to discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -does the teacher have the right to teach his/her students values and attitudes that are inconsistent with what they are being taught at home? <p>Students examine and discuss resolution with reference to Jamaican children</p>
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<p>e.g. sexual, emotional, physical verbal abuse, incest, exploration, child labour, poverty, neglect, effects of migration of parents or caregivers</p> <p>-identification of places to refer cases, reports to police, childrens Services</p> <p>-respecting the dignity of the child</p> <p>d. providing healthy, safe classroom environments</p> <p>-characteristics of classrooms learner</p> <p>Assessment: Essay (20%)</p>	<p>Visits by police personnel, social workers, health workers, doctors, nurses to share knowledge about incidence of such cases, and signals and signs that teachers can use to recognize such cases.</p> <p>Viewing of relevant videos</p> <p>Discussions of issues of confidentiality and earning trust through discretion and respect</p> <p>Students asked to imagine the ideal classroom by identifying developmentally appropriate criteria such – lighting, ventilation, use of colors to stimulate learning, peacefulness, noise control, use of space, arrangement of furniture, location of chalkboard, use of marker boards to reduce chalk allergies, placing of children in classroom to optimize learning etc.</p> <p>Students can be asked to compare the ‘ideal’ learning environment with their knowledge of the reality of most Jamaican classrooms, and develop strategies for compensating for inadequacies.</p>
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Standards:

9. Discuss the influence of classroom social relations – (healthy, as well as conflictual) on learner development and behavior
10. Identify and evaluate strategies for conflict resolution
11. Develop a plan for fostering tolerance and respect for individual differences in classrooms
12. Analyze case studies where rights of children are violated, and make recommendations for helping them-referral, reporting to police, etc.
13. Discuss the impact of physical classroom environment on the learner

Unit 4: Understanding the Learner at School. Learners with Special Needs

Number of hours: 12

Instructional Objectives:

Student Teachers should:

1. Develop a positive attitude towards students with special needs
2. Define exceptionality
3. Identify and briefly describe different categories of exceptionality
4. Describe the steps in referring students with special needs
5. Explain the terms – Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Mainstreaming, Accommodation, Special Education
6. Examine their own attitudes, possible biases towards learners with special needs
7. Explain reasons for safeguarding dignity of exceptional learners and issues of confidentiality
8. Formulate opinions about the rights of exceptional learners
9. Be familiar with government policies on special needs students

CONTENT	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
<p>4.1. <i>Recognizing Learners with Special Needs</i> Defining exceptionally – students who have problems learning in the general classroom Types of Exceptionality -learning disabilities -mental retardation -behavioural/emotional disorders -communication disorders -hearing impairments -visual impairments -giftedness and creativity -physical & health impairments -multiple disabilities</p>	<p>Lecturer and students discuss their own experiences with special needs or exceptional children</p> <p>Although students should be familiar with the types of categories and be able to explain how each term is defined, it is not necessary for them to learn details about each category. (It is recommended that students be required to obtain a copy of the text for current and future reference if they are called upon to address the needs of an exceptional learner). Students are assigned into groups. Each group prepares a report on one of the categories of special needs learners. Each group can prepare a presentation including posters, video, stories etc. to teach other group about their assigned category.</p>
<p>4.2. <i>Meeting the needs of Exceptional Learners in the</i></p>	

<i>Classroom</i>	
<p>4.2.1 The referral Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keeping records - approaching administration <p style="padding-left: 20px;">With concerns about Identifying special needs Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - parent teacher conferences – issues of sensitivity, recommending formal assessment <p>4.2.2 Developing Strategies for Teaching the Learner with Special Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.) - special placements -identification of facilities, resources for special needs learners in Jamaica - accommodations, finding the time to help the exceptional learner <p>4.2.3 Examining attitudes about exceptional learners, and their treatment in society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -discrimination by parents, teachers, peers, school rules, others, difficulties produced by poor infrastructure - creating safe learning environments for exceptional learners - government policies towards exceptional learners, regulations, provisions for accommodations in national examinations 	<p>Students familiarize themselves with basic skills checklists, school assessment questionnaires (MICO)</p> <p>Lecturers are advised not to ask students to try using these checklists in classrooms for ethical reasons-classroom discussion about this issue can be held</p> <p>Students can role play conferences with parents re recommending referral for assessment</p> <p>Discussion on challenges of meeting needs of special needs learners in mainstream classroom</p> <p>Debate/Panel Discussion: Should learners with special needs be placed in mainstream classrooms or placed in special classrooms/schools?</p> <p>Students asked to identify/develop possible strategies for addressing needs of special learners in their classroom</p> <p>Guest lecture by Special Education Specialist, members of parent advocacy groups, adult, adolescent special learners, associations for individuals with special needs</p> <p>Students can develop rules for classroom behavior/guidelines for displaying tolerance, understanding, respect towards special needs learners by other students</p> <p>Examination of Ministry of Education and Culture’s regulations re special needs students</p>

Assessment: Group Presentations: (20%)

Standards:

Students can:

14. Explain the process of recognizing and documenting that a learner has special needs
15. Explain steps in the referral process
16. Explain key concepts used in special education
17. Formulate an argument for or against mainstreaming of exceptional learners
18. Evaluate government policies on special education, and the official treatment of special needs students