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COVER PAGE AND DECLARATION

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Mini Curriculum Creation

European International University
EDUC520: Curriculum & Instruction Planning & Development
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Mini-Curriculum Document on Teaching Decision Making based on a Christian Faith Context

1. Preliminaries

Philosophy of Education

This mini curriculum is based on the principles of perennialism which values knowledge that transcends time. It is built on the foundational belief that there are timeless basic tenets of education that should hold true regardless of conditions and circumstances.

According to the Christian Holy Bible (hereafter referred to as **Bible**), God's Word indicates that eternal truths do not change. Scripture says good versus evil, right versus wrong, and truth versus lies are meaningful and objective distinctions (Holy Bible, New International Version, 1978/2011, Isaiah 5:20; Romans 12:9; Hebrews 5:14; Revelation 20:11–12).

Perennialism is a subject-centered philosophy and the goal of a perennialist educator is to teach students to think rationally and develop minds that can think critically (Teaching Academy, n.d.). Therefore, the focus of the educator is to impart universal truths for the personal development of the students, by inculcating principles that will prepare students for life. The teacher acts as the director and coach and delivers clear teachings to point the students in the right direction. The teacher acts as a beacon to provide a guiding light, and the students use the teachings to navigate his/her lifelong learning. For this mini curriculum, success is when the learners demonstrate outworking of the fruit of the spirit, which are, in accordance with the Bible, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control (Holy Bible, NIV, Galatians 5:22-23).

Description of Target Audience

The target audience for this mini curriculum is anyone who engages with lower primary school children aged between 8 to 10 years old (hereafter referred to as **educators**). This includes schoolteachers or care givers to such children. The materials are based on texts from the Bible. Whilst you do not need to belong to the Christian faith to use this curriculum, at the minimum, you should not disagree with the principles and values that are being imparted. An educator who does not truly believe in what he/she teaches will not be an effective one.

The children for whom the teaching is prepared (hereafter referred to as **students**) are children who are transitioning into a new phase of realisation and who are beginning to be more conscious of their self-identity. They are at a stage of gaining independence from their primary care givers and yet are unsure and uncertain of what constitutes right and wrong, especially when the issues are not clearly black or white. In this discovery stage, children are curious, they want to exert their self-authority but when things go wrong, they can be overwhelmed by feelings of guilt or taken by surprise by the consequences of their actions. These children can become beleaguered by the concept of fairness, unable to grapple at why grown-ups or others can do things that they are prohibited to do.

In the past, children used to gather around their elders and listen to stories passed down from generations to generations which will impart the culture or society expected values to the children. Today however, with increasing broadband and mobile connectivity, and the proliferation of smartphones and other smart screen devices, children are spending less time listening to such stories and instead more time on their devices, watching videos or playing online games. The world of children has evolved to become virtual, with no clear and physical boundaries. The Internet is good, but like the proverbial forbidden fruit, it can be a source of temptation and addiction. Children often trust and believe what they see, and if unchecked and without proper guidance and explanation, the external influences that come through the online media will form their worldview. In yearly surveys of United States' 8th, 10th, and 12th graders between 1991 to 2016, adolescents who spent more time on electronic communication and screens (e.g., social media, the Internet, texting, gaming) and less time on non-screen activities (e.g., in-person social interaction, sports/exercise, homework, attending religious services) had lower psychological well-being (measured by self-esteem, life satisfaction, and happiness) (Twenge, 2018).

General Goals

The general goal of this curriculum is to serve as a framework to educators to guide the students' thought process, to be able to think rationally and critically, based on the following principles:

1. Life has meaning when we can discover our natural skills and talents and to hone these skills and talents (gifts and stewardship of gifts).
2. Life is purposeful when we can use our gifts as acts of service to others (servitude).

3. We treat others equally and with compassion (love your neighbour as yourself).
4. In all things, do so with an attitude of thankfulness (gratitude).
5. Challenges are a part of life; challenges can strengthen and stretch us to become better version of ourselves (grit and resilience).

Specific Objectives (Learning Outcomes)

In the current Internet age, children have easy access to information at their fingertips. But knowledge is not the same as wisdom. The key learning outcome of this curriculum is that students will be able to, in different situations:

- a. know the appropriate course of action to take; and
- b. have the wisdom and courage to act or react in a Godly (vs ungodly) manner, with discipline and self-control.

Subject Matter / Content

The content of this curriculum are stories and scripture from the Bible. Stories, a way of transmitting values and wisdom, have moral power because they give children a common reference point and provide them with good examples (Kilpatrick, 1993).

1. Story of Creation

- God is the creator (there is none higher than Him)
- All creation is from Him, including Man (Adam and Eve)
- All that was created is good

2. Story of the Fall

- Man was given the freedom and capacity to make choices (free will)
- Eve wanted to know what God knows, she wanted to be like God (desire)
- Eve did not believe God that she will die if she eats the forbidden fruit (doubt)
- Sin (disobedience, pride) leads to separation from God (death)
- Sin nature is in every Man

3. Story of Jesus' Birth, Death and Resurrection

- God has a plan of reconciliation, Jesus came to the world
- Jesus was tempted but did not fall to temptation (the new Adam)
- He obeyed God's plan to sacrifice himself (die) for others, he showed self-giving love

- Jesus did not remain dead, he rose again on the 3rd day (resurrection)
 - The resurrection means that Jesus had defeated death (sin); it signals a new life, a new beginning for mankind (new creation)
 - We have a choice, that is, to choose if we want to be a follower of Jesus.
 - When we invite Jesus into our life, it means we want to change by turning away from selfish acts (repent)
 - This signals a ‘new’ self, living a new way of life
4. Growing in Christ (Christian way of living)
- The process to grow in Christ is lifelong as we encounter different situations in different seasons of our life
 - It is important to be in a community that is supportive of each other’s growth
 - Participation in community programmes or outreach projects can provide real life experience of serving others
 - The motivation to do good deeds or refrain from doing bad deeds is not because it is mandated by law, for public display, or because we are afraid of the consequences. Rather, we do so because we want to reflect God / Jesus in how we live
 - We look forward to a new heaven and new earth to come (Holy Bible, NIV, Revelations 21:1-7)

Scope, Sequence, and Integration

The scope of the course is to establish a foundation built on Biblical truths to enable students to know, each time they are at a decision point, “What is the right thing to do?”.

In terms of sequencing, follow the sequence as set out in the ‘Subject Matter / Content’ section above. This is to provide a logical flow of events, starting with creation, followed by the fall, and then on to redemption and finally how to remain in a close relationship with God, anchored on the hope of new creation. The principles and Biblical truths are repeated consistently and with regular frequency until the students begin to make the connection and starts to demonstrate what is being taught to real-life application. The content depth is gradually intensified by exploring more complex life questions and answers so that the students will gain maturity in thought and action.

In terms of integration, “Impress them (the teachings) on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Holy Bible, NIV, Deuteronomy 6:7). There can be specific times set aside to read and memorise Bible verses and to discuss how the Biblical principles apply to life today, but more importantly, the teachings should be integrated into the students’ daily lives and activities. The teachings are alive and must permeate into the daily activities of the students. The learning should not just be head knowledge. Whenever the opportunity arises, the educator should draw parallels between Biblical principles and what the students see, do and experience to bring the teaching to life and into the hearts of the students.

2. Implementation

Identification of Constraints

Some of the constraints for teaching this mini curriculum are:

1. Who is most suited to teach - Sunday school teachers are at the top of the list, however, Sunday school sessions are usually held once a week for only around 2 hours. The interaction time may be too limited to have a meaningful impact.
2. Ability to teach – Educators, including Sunday school teachers (especially volunteers who just teach the given syllabus), may initially be hesitant to teach the course as they do not feel equipped to teach ‘life’. Some educators may feel concerned about teaching the wrong principles and guiding the students wrongly.
3. Role model - The key constraint is where educators do not ‘*walk the talk*’, that is, they do not believe in and emulate the principles that are being taught.
4. Connection - Deep, transformative learning can only take place if educators are able to make a connection with the children before they begin the teaching (connection before correction). This material is not for an educator to simply talk it to and into the students, rather, it is a growing journey which an educator takes together with the student.
5. Key success measure – how to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum and the implementation.

Action Plan to Minimize

To overcome the constraints identified, the mitigating actions include:

1. This curriculum works best where a community of educators can be formed, comprising Sunday school teachers, school teachers, special interest teachers, parents and elders who are aligned in raising the students in the Biblical principles. This can be done as an initiative of the church in the community. As the saying goes – ‘it takes a village to raise a child’. Among the different educators in the life of a student, there is an understanding of who does what to ensure there are no gaps or inconsistencies in the student’s learning. Regular sync-ups (in person or via video or telephone call) among the educators who form the student’s circle of influence is helpful to share observations on the overall well-being of the student.
2. As the community grows, it is important that the educators have access to:
 - a. Regular equipping training on Biblical teachings. In this respect, a working team who takes responsibility for identifying and curating the right courses and study for the educators is useful.
 - b. Support group(s) among educators to edify each other emotionally and spiritually, either through regular in person session or through a forum for example, WhatsApp or Telegram group chat. The sharing of testimonies in such groups can be an encouragement to one another.

The above initiatives, which are not exhaustive, can build conviction and confidence among the educators.

Success of the curriculum and its implementation can be seen in changes in the students’ attitudes and behaviours, that is, whether the student is moving towards or away from Godliness. In the section on Student Performance Assessment below, there are some suggested formative assessments which educators can use to assess the level of a student’s progress.

Learning Experience

(resources, activities, instructional strategies)

The teaching principles to cultivate the learning experience are:

1. Diagnostic assessment – Before beginning the teaching, educators can ask questions to the students to assess the starting point of the students’ understanding and worldview.
2. Teach like Jesus - Jesus uses everyday pictures and illustrations (parables), employing the language of the people to make known God’s presence, power,

promises and purposes for God's people, and to teach listeners what it means to live a new life with Christ at the centre (Fallon, 2012).

3. Routine - set up a rhythm and engage the students with regularity.
4. Deep and two-way engagement – allow students to ask questions and more importantly, make the students feel heard. Take time to consider the reason for the students' question before providing the answer. Importantly, avoid sweeping statements such as “Because the Bible says so” or “Because I say so”. Educators can share personal testimonies with the students so that the students can better relate with the educator.
5. Creating a supportive learning environment – do not judge nor disrespect questions or sharing by students. Make students feel accepted. Cultivate a positive relationship that is caring, inclusive and trusting. Explain that sin nature exists because humans have desires of the flesh, and this is normal and happens to everyone. The key is how we respond to the desires and temptations.
6. Multi-sensory approach – experiment with different delivery mediums and approaches which matches with the student's learning style, for example, Bible reading, memory verse, guide books such as TruthQuest Children's Ministries' Discipleship Guide and activity booklet, watching videos, worksheets, art and craft, singing worship songs, role plays and debating 'What would Jesus do' under different situations.
7. Encourage reflective thought and action – students learn most effectively when they can stand back from the information and ideas that they have engaged with and consider the learnings objectively. Reflective learners can assimilate new learnings and integrate them with what they already understand.
8. Enhance the relevance of new learning – educators look for opportunities for the students to use or apply what they have learnt in a variety of contexts
9. Facilitate shared learning – students learn as they engage in shared activities with others. Educators can encourage this process by cultivating a community of students who can come together where everyone, including the educators, is a learner. The community can be a forum for sharing, reflection and receiving feedback. Further, being part of a community can inculcate a sense of accountability among members in the group.

Educators are prepared to respond to questions from students, such as:

1. Why did God make the world?
2. Why did God make Adam and Eve?
3. How do I know God is real? He does not answer all my prayers so he can't be real.
What if there is a greater God to God?
4. What did God put the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden when Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat from it?
5. What did God allow the serpent to tempt Eve?
6. What does heaven and hell look like?
7. Why does God allow bad things to happen?
8. How do we know that the Bible is real? What if people misheard or misunderstood the prophets? Or simply made up what they wrote in the books of the Bible?

In responding, always refer to the Bible but do so with an understanding of the context and meaning of the Scripture verse. Alternatively, educators can invite guest speakers (for example, pastors or other senior members of the church who has strong Biblical knowledge) to share with students their experience and to answer questions of the students.

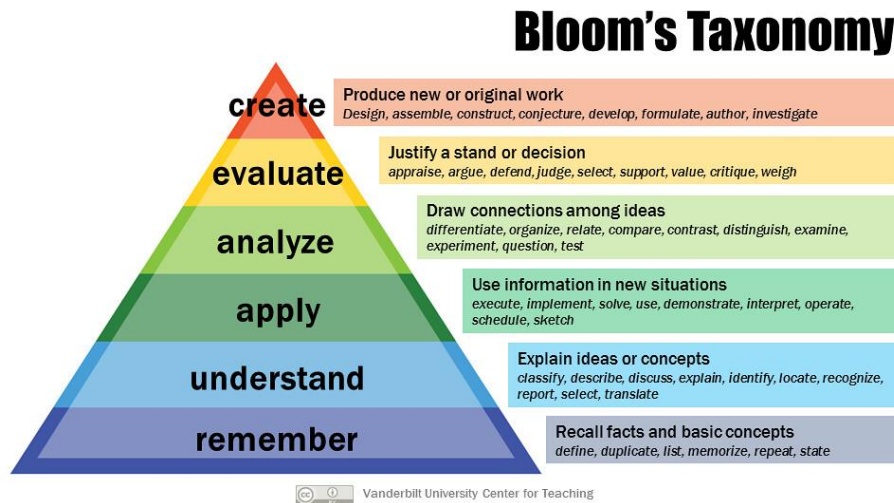
For maximum results, the regular interaction between educator(s) and the student should be for a period of between 6 to 12 months, depending on how long a student needs to understand and start to apply the principles being taught. Thereafter, where possible, periodic check-ins by the educator can be a source of encouragement and support to the student to continue to adopt and adapt the principles to his/her way of life.

3. Evaluation

Student Performance Assessment

Educators can use formative assessment to monitor the students' learning and as ongoing feedback to the educators to modify their teaching (if needed) and to the students. Educators keep a record of the students' transformation in terms of understanding of what is the right action to take and if students can follow through to make the right decision and take the right action. Educators to take note of the questions asked by the students as the questions provide an insight into the worldview of the student and the uncertainties they are facing as they encounter different situations in their life.

Bloom's Taxonomy (Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, 2021) offers a useful framework for designing the student's performance assessment.



Bloom's Taxonomy	Examples of Student Assessment
Remember	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorise and recite selected Scripture verses • Memorise and recite the books of the Bible in sequence • Memorise and sing worship songs • Use quiz (example, using Kahoot) to test student's knowledge of facts in the Bible stories
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to explain what sin is • Able to explain the consequence of sin • Able to explain why Jesus had to die • Students get together to act in a stage performance for example, the birth and resurrection of Jesus
Apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario play / role play – be able to apply the Bible principles to explain the course of action under different simulated situations • Able to tell a story based on modern life using key concepts from the Bible story • Students are asked to keep a journal and record the times when the student was tempted to sin and how the student managed to overcome the temptation
Analyze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to compare and contrast between Adam and Jesus • Able to compare and contrast between Martha and Mary • Able to explain how the same person can change between the 2 characteristics
Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider an action that was taken by the student (or someone with whom the student can relate to) and justify the action based on the Biblical principles learnt
Create	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new worship song based on the principles learnt

Bloom's Taxonomy	Examples of Student Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new parable to explain a Biblical principle • Develop a basic syllabus to teach about creation, fall and redemption to pre-school children, and prepare the teaching materials to teach it to pre-school children • Create a board game to teach the Biblical principles

Start from the first level of Bloom's taxonomy and work up through the various levels as the student demonstrate understanding and mastery. A strong foundation at a lower level allows the student to progress to the next level and gradually work the way up to the apex of the pyramid.

Teacher Performance Assessment

Teacher performance assessment can be done through peer observation (by other educators) and feedback from the students. The peer educator is invited to join in a session between the educator and the student(s) and observes to what extent (using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not observed and 5 being very much observed and evident) the educator being observed provides a learning environment using the teaching principles as set out in the section on Learning Experience above.

Summative Assessment

At the end of the course, educators can consider different approaches to conduct the summative assessment.

One approach is for the student to undertake an inductive Bible study (“**IBS**”). IBS is an investigative way of studying Scripture and when applied properly, this method provides a better overall understanding of a passage. The inductive method comprises three steps, which are, 1. observation, 2. interpretation, and 3. application (Faithlife, 2020). Educators and students can watch the following or similar videos to better understand what IBS is about.

Inductive Bible study - How to study the Bible (Part 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W5XKGSjLLU>

How to study the Bible (Part 2) - Inductive method example Matthew 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQlIMChehR4>

IBS can be used to check on the maturity of the student after completing the teachings under this mini curriculum and the formative assessments. If the student can demonstrate mastery, for example:

1. Make good observations about the Bible passage - able to identify the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How; able to take note of repeated words, words that contrast one with another and words that indicate cause and effect;
2. Able to interpret the meaning that the writer of the passage wishes to convey – thinks about the context that the passage was written and considers other Scripture passages that may help to interpret this Scripture passage; and
3. Apply to everyday Scripture teaching to everyday life – be able to explain how the learning from the Scripture passage can be applied to daily life including being able to provide specific example(s) as to how the Scripture passage is speaking to the student based on his/her current situations,

such mastery, compared to the starting point of the student, would indicate that the student has matured spiritually during the duration of the study. IBS can be taught by a senior Church leader (“**trainer**”) over a duration of 6 to 8 weeks, which will give the trainer a good overview of the spiritual development of the student and for the trainer to provide feedback to the educators on the student’s development.

Another approach to summative assessment is to organise a camp for a group of students who had completed the course under this mini syllabus. During the camp, educators can observe the behaviours of the students and how the students participate in the different activities that have been planned and demonstrate what they have learnt. The planned activities serve as a test run for the various Biblical principles taught and educators can also use the opportunity to point out real life application to the students. The camp also provides an opportunity for the students to learn from one another, as they see how other students internalise the same Biblical teachings.

Need for Revision?

As modern life continues to evolve technologically and digitally, the method of delivery for this mini curriculum should be reviewed regularly to find the best approach to teach the Biblical principles to students. Feedback from educators and students should be sought to consider the practical experience when preparing for revised versions of the course.

Additionally, it is useful to investigate similar courses conducted in other communities and adopt best practises and applicable elements in the revised versions.

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