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STARTING OUT AS A BUSINESS TEACHER

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have made the decision to become a business teacher and you are about to embark on your practical teaching experience. You may have many questions throughout your initial teacher education (ITE), which this chapter aims to address. Mainly, the place of business in schools within the 14-19 curriculum, and how the subject has evolved. As a beginning teacher of business, your own experiences can have an invaluable place in the classroom, and knowing how and when to use these, to make your lessons more effective, will be discussed. In addition to this, how you can develop and analyse your subject knowledge as you become a more established practitioner will be examined. It is recommended that alongside this chapter, you also read Unit 8 of *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience*, 8th edition (Capel et al., 2019), which discusses the structure and types of schools.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- Understand business as a subject and its place in the curriculum.
- Know how to use your own experiences and understanding to enhance your business teaching.
- Understand how to analyse and develop your own subject knowledge.

Check the requirements of your ITE programme to see which relate to this chapter.

THE PLACE OF BUSINESS IN A SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM

The shifting status of business reflects the way in which it has successfully responded to the academic values that dominate the secondary school curriculum (Davies, 1999), but there is a continuing debate amongst teachers and educators about whether business is a traditional academic subject, with proven theories and methods of analysis, or vocational, with a focus on skills and preparation for practice. What you may find is that many business courses are a mixture of both.

At some point during your career, you may be asked what the point of teaching business is and why it should be given curriculum time when the curriculum is already so full (see Unit 7 of *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience*, 8th edition (Capel et al., 2019) for more on the secondary school curriculum). There is a limited amount of curriculum time and fitting anything else in usually requires reducing time from, or removing altogether, another part of the curriculum. To help justify the place of business subjects, Davies and Brant (2006) suggest that they should be looked at in a wider context with a consideration for how business contributes to the overall curriculum in preparing pupils for life. Bereiter (1973) states that 'we look to education ... to provide a productive work force ...' (p. 236), and if this is the case, then business has a rightful place on a school curriculum as it prepares pupils for life beyond school. For example, it is not unusual for a pupil to know very little about the banking system or a specific piece of legislation, which are topics covered in some business courses, so adding business to the curriculum in some form could help address issues such as these.

Business is a topical subject that can motivate pupils to explore their own specific interests and, as a beginning teacher, you are in a prime position to spark that interest early on. Due to its topicality, it is a subject that engages pupils as they can use their imaginations and experiences to try to understand the way in which businesses and their stakeholders behave. So, when teaching, the content can be made relevant and tailored to individual pupil interest. This approach supports the notion that knowledge is socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1978).

BRINGING BUSINESS TO LIFE FOR PUPILS

Business tools, such as how to prepare accounts, can be applied to a variety of businesses known to the pupils, making business accessible to them as they use information from their own interests and experiences. If meaningful learning in business, economics and enterprise must draw upon pupils' direct experience (Davies and Brant, 2006, citing Wood, 1997; Ekpenyong, 1999; Gibb, 2002), then pupils should be encouraged to contextualise their learning to their own interests and experiences so that there is a 'hook' for them to latch on to. This will not only spark pupils' interest, but will also provide them with the opportunity to see how business theories, tools and models are applicable and relevant to them. For example, a pupil I taught had a specific interest in boxing, which they used as a basis for

all their business ideas, such as how to market boxing to young people. This made the work they were doing and the subject more accessible and interesting for them.

An introductory lesson I taught to all my classes involved pupils choosing an entrepreneur they admire, which allowed for them to pick someone from an industry they have an interest in. Their task was to produce a presentation about the person answering business questions, such as their motivation, challenges they had to overcome and their leadership style. This activity not only engaged the pupils, but it was also a way for me as their teacher, to gain an insight into their motivations, interests and commitment to the subject. Alongside this, research and presentation skills were introduced, with the rest of the class gaining exposure to a wide range of entrepreneurs, many of whom they had not heard of.

As a very topical subject, business relates to all of our daily lives. We all watch adverts, shop, both online and in person, receive customer service, good and bad, and have some experience in everyday life of the topics covered by the term 'business'. For this reason, many pupils who have been, or who are, disengaged in other subjects can often be motivated in business. They are often keen to show what they know, what they notice from everyday life and what they see and read about in the news. The pupils all have opinions, and business lessons present opportunities for these to be shared. Some of the liveliest lessons I taught came from showing stimulus material taken from a recent headline. A particularly powerful moment when teaching business ethics was showing the pupils a recently broadcast documentary on how fast fashion is created. After watching the documentary, I prompted the class to discuss the ethics behind fast fashion, with questions such as, 'Is it acceptable to produce fashion items using child labour so we can wear cheap, clothing?'. Most pupils had an opinion, and a strong one at that, and not all were as one might expect, which provided me with a deeper understanding of my pupils' values and belief systems. A discussion like this was helpful in demonstrating to the whole class the value of different perspectives; not everyone thought the same, but no one was wrong! It also highlighted the tricky part of teaching ethics (see [Chapter 6](#) for more on teaching ethics in business).

Now undertake [Task 1.1](#) to develop your understanding of business as a subject of study in the secondary school.

Task 1.1 Finding out the views of others on why business should be studied

- Firstly, write an account of what you think the value of business is, as a secondary school subject and share this with your tutor to compare and contrast their views to yours.
- Next, discuss with your tutor the business curriculum offer at your practical teaching school. Which courses does it offer and why? Are there any cross-curricular links made and how? Are there any extracurricular activities? If there are, what are they and what is their aim? If not, try to find out why this is the case.

Store your notes in your PDP.

PHSRE AND BUSINESS

Personal, Health, Social and Relationships Education (PHSRE) incorporates elements of business in the 11-13 curriculum, such as personal budgeting, savings loans and investments, ethical shopping, entrepreneurs, enterprise and consumer rights. There are also topics such as interviewing for jobs, health and safety at work and the role of trade unions. The inclusion of these suggests that business-related subjects are both important and necessary for all pupils, thus business has a place on all schools' curriculums.

In those schools where business is not on offer through PHSRE, there is a missed opportunity to provide some business education to their lower school pupils and they forego the chance to prepare these pupils for the challenges of the real world. An approach to accommodating business in the curriculum as a discrete subject could be to map out where it would sit in other curriculum areas. Accounting could be covered in Mathematics, motivation and leadership styles in Psychology and business ethics in Philosophy. There are some schools which do adopt this approach, but there can be an issue with ownership of the subject – Who is monitoring it overall, what is being covered and where? – which gives rise to business becoming atomistic in nature. This is something that needs to be avoided if the value of the subject is to remain high, so it is something you could consider taking a lead on.

BUSINESS AS AN ENRICHMENT OPTION

Business is well suited to extra-curricular and curriculum enrichment opportunities that can be offered to all pupils outside formal lesson time. The benefit of this is the opportunity for skills development, such as problem solving and resilience, but in an informal setting that the pupils opt in to.

Now undertake [Task 1.2](#).

Task 1.2 **Planning an enterprise day**

Imagine you work in a co-educational, multi-cultural secondary school with eight forms of entry in each year group. You and your business colleagues have been asked to plan an enterprise day for year 7, for which the focus is starting a business.

List the different activities you can incorporate and how you can underpin this with business content and produce a plan that includes the following:

- The overall objective of the day.
- How the year group will be organised; think about the grouping and why they should be allocated into these groups.
- How they will be supported by business teachers – Where do they need input to help them move forwards?
- What business content will be covered?

- What you expect them to produce by the end of the day (a check list may be useful here).
- The resources they will need, which will include physical resources such as rooms as well as resources such as staffing and time.

Store your notes in your PDP.

EXPLORING YOUR OWN BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCES

Businesses and the way they operate are constantly changing. Legislation has been passed to ensure businesses alter the way they operate in relation to ethics and the environment. For example, since 2015 the law has required large shops in England to charge 5 pence for all single-use plastic carrier bags. This has had implications for businesses and has impacted how they operate. They have had to stop offering free plastic bags and now encourage shoppers to bring their own bags. The UK sugar tax introduced in 2018 to help combat childhood obesity and tooth decay also affects how products are produced, with ingredients and packaging needing to be reviewed. This has had a significant impact on businesses and consumers alike.

Customers and consumers have strong views about what is and what is not ethically and environmentally acceptable, and if businesses ignore these concerns, they are likely to lose custom. Conversely, those businesses that address these issues and, in some cases, make addressing these concerns their unique selling points, can benefit hugely.

As a beginning business teacher, your own experiences and the knowledge you have gained can be brought into your teaching; for example, where you go shopping, what encourages you to spend more, how important the brand is and your consideration of ethics. These experiences influence the way in which you view businesses and their role in society, which in turn may inform how you teach your pupils. I once observed a beginning teacher teaching a class how to construct a cash flow statement using his own monthly inflows and outflows. The pupils were engaged, not least because they were interested in what he spent his teaching salary on and why!

Now undertake [Task 1.3](#).

Task 1.3 M Level Planning a lesson to incorporate your experiences

In this task, you are encouraged to work with your tutor to discuss ideas and reflect on your practice and observations so far:

- Choose a topic from the syllabus used in your placement school (or choose one of those available online) and think of ways you can incorporate your own experiences into the lesson. For example, promotion: think about your weekly

supermarket shop – what do you see, what examples of promotion are there?
How is the store laid out and what impact does this have on your experience?

- Plan a lesson (using the guidance in [Chapter 2](#) and [Figure 2.2](#) on how to write lesson plans) with a focus on integrating your own experiences into the business content, clearly signposting where your own experiences are being used in the lesson to add application and realism.
- Include theories of learning you have studied to help justify in what ways the lesson will be effective.

Store your notes in your PDP.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW AS A BUSINESS TEACHER?

What teachers do is covered more comprehensively in Unit 1 of *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience*, 8th edition (Capel et al., 2019). This section focusses on some of this, as well as the additional knowledge business teachers need.

Teachers will need knowledge that is wide-ranging as ‘effective teaching involves utilising a whole range of different types of knowledge’ (Brant, 2005 p. 3, citing Eraut 1994) and this begins with attempting to develop Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). PCK ‘goes beyond knowledge of the subject matter ... to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching ... the ways of representing and formulating the subject that makes in comprehensive to others’ (Shulman 1986, p. 9). For beginning business teachers, this means that they need a deep knowledge of business concepts (see [Chapter 2](#) for further discussion on the core and threshold concepts in business), alongside an understanding of how pupils learn. This is so that the subject content is taught using methods that result in pupil learning and understanding. It is the job of a business teacher to transform the business content in a way that makes it comprehensible; pupils should learn business theories, models and concepts and know how to apply these to different business contexts and current affairs.

As outlined, alongside the need for deep subject knowledge, an effective teacher also needs knowledge of pedagogy. Here we will look at the five standards of effective pedagogy as suggested by Dalton (1998):

1. *Joint productive activity* - if the work is a collaborative activity, rather than coming only from the teacher, the pupils are more likely to engage with the process and complete the work set. So, when planning and teaching lesson, it is advisable to allow the pupils some element of choice. Give them options from a range of resources or a choice in the way in which they complete the work.

2. *Contextualisation* - this is where the work is set in a scenario the pupils are familiar with and therefore understand. In line with the discussions earlier, if the content is related to something pupils already know and/or have an interest in, they are much more likely to stay engaged. When planning your lessons, contextualise the content by having familiar business references throughout.
3. *Language development* - informal, problem-solving, and academic language should be developed through use and through purposeful, deliberate conversation between the teacher and their pupils, set in the context of the lesson and the subject being taught. Subject-specific language (which is discussed in more detail in [Chapter 10](#)) should be used and alternative words for explaining the same idea or concept can be tried, for example, 'quantity', 'units', 'number', 'items' or 'output' all have the same meaning. Additionally, subject-specific reading and writing strategies should be integrated into each content area so that pupils begin to employ the features required in the subject but, also, are able to access higher level marks awarded for analysis and evaluation (see [Chapters 7](#) and [8](#) for further discussions and suggestions of reading and writing for business; in addition, [Chapter 5](#) discusses Reciprocal Teaching: a pedagogy which supports pupils in becoming skilled readers and learners).
4. *Activities should be challenging* - whatever their level of attainment, pupils should be given activities that challenge and push them beyond that level, for example, if they can draw a break-even graph, then challenge them to read from it, change the variables, etc. This is a way to support their engagement and reduce any potential for boredom (see Unit 4 of *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience*, 8th edition (Capel et al., 2019) for more on pupil progression and differentiation
5. *Instructional conversation* - thinking and the ability to form, express and exchange ideas may be best taught through dialogue, questioning (see [Chapters 5](#) and [7](#) for more on the different types of questions) and sharing ideas and knowledge. In business lessons there are plenty of opportunities for this to happen; for example, when coming up with and explaining ideas for a marketing campaign or a recruitment drive. When planning your lessons, aim to include lots of occasions for instructional conversation to happen; encourage your pupils to talk and share their ideas.

LEARNING FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE

Learning from your experience includes acknowledging that just because something worked once, it does not mean it will always work. Regardless of how many times you have taught a lesson or specific topic, there will be instances where you will need to change it for various reasons, including the class dynamics, levels of attainment or even the time of day! Part of being an effective teacher is the ability to constantly reflect on a lesson to analyse what went well, what could be improved and how. In my own experience, for many years, I taught a lesson on branding using mostly teacher transmission, and pupil responses,

both verbal and written, indicated it was successful; the pupils had understood branding and were able to apply their knowledge to a business context. However, one year this changed. That year, the lessons were during the last period on a Friday afternoon, and I found that pupil engagement levels were very low. This prompted me to reflect on a more pupil-led way to teach the lesson that drew on their previous experiences. The activities I then set them to complete were their own branding exercises, working in groups, where they were asked to build a brand for a product of their choice, deciding the brand image and who the product was aimed at. The class were given creative freedom with the opportunity to engage in peer dialogue, which helped to construct new learning. Once they had completed the activity, there was then a whole class discussion which I used to highlight the business theory that supported the discussion points made (see Unit 5 of *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience*, 8th edition (Capel et al., 2019) to learn more about the ways pupils learn, active learning and teaching styles).

Part of the joy of being a business teacher is that, every day, teaching can reflect what is happening currently and how businesses are affected by external events. Therefore, it is particularly important that you keep your knowledge and practice relevant and up to date. For example, the world-wide Covid-19 pandemic forced all businesses to reassess the way they operated as it impacted most parts of a business. This provided many opportunities to enrich the teaching of business. To keep up to date with current events, it is recommended that you follow the news, listen to podcasts and access relevant websites (see the Key Resources section of this chapter for suggestions).

Also, never underestimate the importance and usefulness of the other staff in your department. They are there to support you through your ITE. When you have a lighter timetable and you are invited to observe as many teachers as possible, seize the opportunity. You can learn so much from the way others in your profession teach the content and make what could be a dry subject, interesting (see Unit 2 of *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience*, 8th edition (Capel et al., 2019) for more on how to maximise your learning from classroom observations).

Do not be afraid to ask for help if you are struggling with a lesson; ask your colleagues how they teach a topic and use resources they have produced if they are appropriate, or amend them to suit your needs if they are not. Also, work with your tutor to plan lessons and mark pupil work together (see [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) for more on lesson planning and assessment in business). Another way to develop your subject knowledge is to buy a good business textbook that covers the full range of business content and is updated regularly.

Examination board websites are invaluable for accessing past examination papers that you can complete. To get an understanding of the examination requirements, you can also use examiner's reports as these give an indication of the style and language used. They also provide insight into the areas in which pupils performed well, but also, importantly, areas of the specification where pupils consistently

misunderstood or made similar mistakes. This information can be used to inform your teaching.

Now undertake [Task 1.4](#).

Task 1.4 **Signposting your use of pedagogic methods in your lesson plan**

- Using the lesson you planned in [Task 1.3](#), go through the individual parts of the plan and identify the range of pedagogical methods you are using. If you have not already, incorporate some or all of the five standards of effective pedagogy.
- After teaching it, reflect on how the lesson went: Did it go as planned? How do you know? Were there any parts of the lesson you would change, and if so, why and how?

Store your notes in your PDP.

ENCOURAGING YOUR PUPILS TO KEEP UP TO DATE

It is important that you encourage your pupils to keep their knowledge of current business affairs up to date. You can ask them to download the BBC news application onto their phones to regularly access the business section where they can get live updates of emerging news stories. Also, Tutor2u (www.tutor2u.net) takes relevant news stories and matches them to business courses usually providing an analysis of the stories with questions to accompany the article. Tutor2u is updated daily, with the most recent articles appearing at the top of the daily blog so all the hard work has been done for both you and your pupils!

It is also very useful to encourage your pupils (or your school librarian) to subscribe to the *Business Review Magazine*, in which the application of theory to current business issues and challenges is included. The magazine explores different subject content, and it even manages to make challenging topics such as critical path analysis interesting by using examples of how it was used over decades, when planning the construction of the Channel Tunnel. The Key Resources section of this chapter has the aforementioned resources listed for you to access.

SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS

- There are many opportunities for business to be part of the curriculum: on its own, as a discrete subject in the 14-19 curriculum, as part of PHSRE or as an extra-curricular activity. Whichever form it comes in, it has a valuable place in a school's curriculum.

- Business is a subject which is relevant to all pupils. Even if they do not choose it as an examination option, it is important that everyone gets an opportunity to have some business input.
- Business as a subject lends itself to using your own experiences to enhance and enrich lessons, and using this can help stimulate debate and encourage pupils to listen to each other and appreciate different points of view. This also applies to pupils who can use their own experiences to develop a deep understanding of the subject.
- While it is vital to have a detailed and thorough knowledge of the subject, to teach effectively it is critical that you also understand and have knowledge of teaching pedagogies. Combining the two will support you in becoming an effective business teacher.
- No matter how long you have been teaching, you constantly need to be looking for new and innovative ways to teach the subject. Remember that just because you taught a topic a certain way once, it does not mean it will work again and you may need to go back to the beginning to find new ways to deliver it another time.
- The nature of the subject is such that it is ever-changing, and examples and case studies need to be kept topical and relevant. With this in mind, it is necessary for business teachers to keep up to date with current events, and your subject knowledge should also be refreshed as new content is added to business courses and conventions change.

Check which requirements of your ITE programme you have addressed through this chapter.

KEY RESOURCES

BBC

www.bbc.co.uk/search?q=bbc+business

The BBC website has up-to-date news articles which can be used to stimulate discussion or to provide factual information about specific companies.

Business Review Magazine

www.hoddereducation.co.uk/businessreview

The *Business Review Magazine* is published by Hodder Education. It is a monthly magazine which looks at specific parts of the business syllabus and uses theory to explain what is happening in relevant, topical businesses. There is often exam advice from practicing teachers and examiners. The magazine brings the subject to life.

MESHGuides on Entrepreneurship Education

www.meshguides.org/guides/node/436

These guides are designed to support teaching as an evidence informed profession with discussions on definitions, issues and resources.

Subject association - The Economics, Business and Enterprise Association (EBEA)

<https://ebea.org.uk/>

The Economics, Business and Enterprise Association (EBEA) is the professional subject association for everyone interested in the teaching and study of Economics, Business

and Enterprise. As a registered charity, the EBEA seeks to provide members with professional support promoting the teaching of Economics, Business Studies and Enterprise and encouraging curriculum development in these subjects. As a beginning teacher, you will have access to high quality materials to support the development of teaching skills, a structured programme of support and opportunities to attend and listen to webinars with representatives from Ofsted and exam boards.

The *Financial Times* for Schools Programme

www.ft.com/content/7ab6a9ec-1e4e-11e8-aaca-4574d7dabfb6

The *Financial Times* (FT) offers free online subscriptions to pupils aged 16-19, their teachers and schools around the world, and to colleges of further education in the UK. It states that 'reading the FT will help in study, essay writing, exams and broadening knowledge to improve performance in interviews for university and employment'. There are articles with suggested questions and classroom discussion points and the FT also hosts competitions for pupils.

Tutor2u

www.tutor2u.net/business

A free resource created by current and ex-business teachers. It includes relevant theory and resources to support teaching, there are weekly news quizzes, revision quizzes and analysis of topical and recent examples from the media. It provides recap and revision lessons closer to exam times and maps the questions which have been asked in the past so that obvious gaps can be identified. It is updated daily and therefore your lesson can accurately reflect what is happening in current events.

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