HOW WE TEACH MONEY IN GRADE 1

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Extended abstract

In our experience, the teaching of money to very young learners (Grade 1s) can be difficult. Knowing where to start and what to emphasise is not straight forward. Some learners come into school already familiar with all coins and notes, while others will happily talk about R25 coins or 10 cent notes. Some teachers might think a logical starting point for teaching money is to build up a concept of each coin representing a group of 1c coins, so 5c is explained as being the same as five 1c coins. However in South Africa, 1c coins are no longer used, so the smallest realistic starting point becomes a group of 5 (or a 5c coin). In addition, the question "What is a cent?" is very hard to explain to the child who does not yet have a real concept of 1 hundred, which is outside the secure number range of many Grade 1 children. And further compounding this, is that children also do not experience buying anything in cents (making cents appear to be without any value) in the real world. As a result, setting problems involving prices in cents quickly becomes very artificial and discordant with learners' social experiences of money in the world (where any exist). We feel able to help children recognise and become familiar with coins; but meaningful mathematical activities that go beyond very superficial recognition seem more allusive.

So what can we do to overcome these challenges? The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) offers the following in terms of what is expected for Grade 1 learners in term 2:

- Recognises South African currency coins 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, R1, R2; R5
- Solves money problems involving totals and change to R10 and in cents up to 20 cents (CAPS: 43)

The term by term guidelines suggest focus first on coins, and only later on Rands. We have found that this is both difficult to interpret and to implement in the classroom. We have found that talking about money – trying to focus on coins - quickly turns to discussion on Rands. Yet the idea of 100c being the same as R1, is a big idea, and again beyond their secure number range. The number range of money problems was also not clear to us, as we wondered whether Rands and cents would be treated together or separately. For example, was the expectation that learners should find the change from R10 for an item costing of R4,80? Surely change to 20c implies expense of up to 80c when realistic money contexts are considered? Reading of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Grade 1 level, can be overwhelming, and finding expected progression for this topic from one term to the

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next, as well as being mindful of connections that can be made between this and other sections of mathematics at times feels impossible.

For this reasons we share our experiences when teaching Grade 1 money to give others access to our journey and reflections. We present examples of the type of activities the first author has tried in her Grade 1 class in the second term in a public school in South Africa.

The lesson activities on money – together with a motivation for their selection – are described in some detail, paying attention to the careful selection of the numbers, social skills and mathematical competencies being developed. We include examples of learners' responses to the activities, by presenting and discussing some examples of their written work. Finally a formal assessment which was administered following this teaching intervention is discussed. Learner responses to this school assessment together with discussion on their common errors and misconceptions are presented.

Teachers and teacher educators may find that some of what is reported has resonance with their own contexts, or they may feel stimulated to share alternative approaches to teaching money with this age group. Their classroom needs may be markedly different to the one reported on here; but that some of what is described in terms of pedagogic dilemmas and difficulties on how and what to teach with regard to money; may be meaningfully adapted to different contexts. Finally it may interest participants, that the lessons from this resourced context are being applied in a public school in township / informal settlement context (however our experiences in this more challenging context are not the focus of this paper).

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