

“Practical Learning Experiment focused on Discussion-orientated Education”
~What can be Learnt from Debate Instruction Examining the Dormitory Fire Incident~
Class Overview (including extracurricular training)
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1. This Class’s Goal

This class attempts to replicate the findings of Kumiko Ikeda (1987). *Teaching the Debate & Argument of Social Issues. Iwanami Koza Educational Methods 5: Teaching Sociology and History*, a practical debating lesson focusing on the concept of counterargument, allowing students to experience the “proliferation of codes” through the analysis of written information. The ultimate goal is that students acquire the viewpoints and methods needed to correctly place debating elements in the curriculum, units and classes of their area of specialty through a critical study of this experience.

2. Class Overview

① Read Article 1 (letter published in Asahi Shimbun on 19/1/1972)

On the night of January 7 1972 the dormitory of Araki Junior High School in Mamurogawa-machi, Yamagata Prefecture burnt down killing the boarding master Mr. Watanabe. After evacuating the students, Mr. Watanabe grabbed a fire extinguisher and ran back in to battle the flames, only to be found dead in the burned-out rubble the following day. Mr. Watanabe was passionate about education in remote areas. Headmaster Sato, who sent the letter, finishes by saying Mr. Watanabe taught us the true meaning of “responsibility” through his actions.

② Analytical Reading of Article 1

- Confirm who is at fault.
- Rebut the assertions made in Headmaster Sato’s letter.
- Rewrite article 1 as a factual report.
- Extract evidence from article 1 supporting that the blaze was beyond initial fire extinguishing efforts.
- Confirm the scope of Mr. Watanabe’s responsibilities.
- Clarify that nothing is mentioned of the actual cause of the fire.

③ Read Article 2 (letter published in Asahi Shimbun on 25/1/1972)

Letter sent in by Mr. Takahashi, the boarding master of a junior high school in Ojiya City, Niigata Prefecture. Mr. Takahashi asserts that the dormitories of compulsory education institutions are illegal facilities with no legal basis. The household kerosene heater that caused the fire should not have been used in this kind of facility and the administrative neglect that allowed its use resulted in the death of Mr. Watanabe. The real issue should not be avoided by sentimentalizing his death as the school’s headmaster did.

④ Analytical Reading of Article 2

- Demonstrate that the opposing argument is incorrect and confirm the validity of this assertion.
- Confirm that the situation can be understood by determining accountability from only two sources.
- Thoughts about supplemental data (prefectural education board's recognition of Mr. Watanabe).

⑤ Organize Thoughts

- Organize how thoughts branched out while reading the two articles.
- Confirm the meaning of “codes” and “proliferation of codes.”

3. Extracurricular Training

- ① Objectify Kumiko Ikeda's experiment and examine standards for separating meaningful debates from unproductive debates.
- ② Submit the examination result as a report.
 - Comments are added to reports as feedback. Reports are shared by the whole group.