

Wrestling with enquiry questions: linking content and concept in medium term planning

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- Cambridge History department have refused to grade their trainees. Have instead developed statements about what makes an outstanding trainee - does not refer to Ofsted. These statements are revisited and revised over time
- The biggest thing trainees struggle with is building a truly engaging, sound enquiry question.
- Enquiry questions are the pieces of wording which frame what discussions happen in the classroom. They need a clear focus on a second order concept. They need to be historically and pedagogically sound.
- This concept impacts on EVERYTHING else.
- If you are clear on the journey of learning then everything within the lesson makes sense. We need to get away from the "tyranny of the lesson". Moving beyond the "isolated chunk"
- Enquiry is not about 'skills', it is a way of knitting together a sequence of lessons in a powerful way.
- Introductions and conclusions of lessons are vital - they draw together learning in an enquiry sequence. The puzzle needs to get harder as we progress through.
- In the final few lessons when everything comes together, are we able to assess properly the learning in the sequence - concept and content.
- "You can only assess what you teach" - the end point must be linked to what has come before it. Assessment is not a bolt on
- The constant revisiting of old knowledge and the addition of new knowledge means that more demanding content can be absorbed - does this link to some of our better units this year.
- The best enquiry questions are "deceptively simple". Students need to be able to get a handle on the question immediately but find that they keep having to reassess the question.

Example Diversity (Similarity and Difference) Enquiry: Who were the victims of the Holocaust?

- First couple of lessons were fairly straight forward but naive look into diversity amongst Jews
- Next few lessons looked at other groups affected.
- At the end of each lesson the groups affected had to be represented on acetate - diagrammatic - proportions etc.

- Moved on then to more complex issues eg. Geographical diversity, ethnicity, age and generations, those left behind, the unborn, bystanders?, perpetrators?
- How do we define these people....not just as groups but as mothers, children, fathers, the old, the young. How can we represent these on the acetate? How do we now say who are victims?
- What about the impact on truncating community? Who are the victims of the Holocaust NOW?
- How can we define the term victim? Are perpetrators different? What do we mean by victim? Is victim the right word for the Key question?
- The Enquiry Question negates the need for lesson objectives
- Tried to answer the big question then tried to play the "generalisation game" framing appropriate new generalisations

Effective Enquiries

- There needs to be a really clear conceptual focus
- There needs to be a negotiation on the relevance of content with the students, negotiable.
- There must be an eye at all times on the final outcomes....what might go wrong? What will students be saying by the end?
- Example thinking: Who were the native Americans? Could look at how they were perceived and categorised by Europeans, how they were compared, what we can discover about their cultures, how they are distinguished now, how native Americans perceive themselves - difficulties of oral history. Some kind of generalisation challenging museum piece...

Example Continuity and Change Enquiry: What Kind of Change was the French Revolution?

- Started to refine enquiries: how big was the change from subject to citizen? -> how big was the change for French people? -> Who experienced the most freedom during the FR? -> How Quickly Did France Change During the French Revolution? -> What Kind of Change was the French Revolution?
- Allowed the students to define the kinds of change they felt were appropriate.
- Not "what can be said to have changed?" shifting to "what is the nature of change?"

How does the Enquiry Question fit in with progress over a longer period? Causation Enquiry

- Why was Becket murdered? - zone of relevance activity - move cards from top left to bottom right.
- Teaching is the "cultivation of desire" turning something which might be quite hard into something students want to do. Not about finding what they WANT to do....
- Get to the idea that the line is too simple.
- Testing the line, arguing for moving some of the causes.
- Rearrange the cards to show Becket's murder in the middle - a temporal pool - does this give us more or less analytic power?
- Now categorise
- Would all of these cards stay in here if the question was refined to "Why did Henry and Becket's quarrel end in murder?" this question narrows down the focus of the project - it does not give us the context of the church etc.

- Change question again "Why did Henry and Becket quarrel so bitterly and for so long?"
Now there is a much greater focus on the context and less focus on the events of the murder. Still problematic
 - The really big enquiry is "Why was it so difficult for medieval monarchs to control the Church?"
 - We need to have a sound way of assessing these units based on what they are trying to develop. We need to evaluate thinking in open ended and qualitative way. We can assess by using the enquiry question.
 - Mike Maddison has produced a new case study for outstanding depts. Key issues - scholarly reading and debate over enquiries....this is a challenge we need to meet.
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- We have a significant challenge here to make sure why define enquiries which: show deep thinking; have a stable conceptual focus; have a dynamic concept scope; have a recursive encounter with the enquiry; have and emergent puzzle; have a knowledge transforming outcome.