

THE EVE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK – THE THIRD INSTALMENT

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This is the third chapter in the continuing ‘story’ of the curriculum framework for the EVE-project. In the previous two versions I have outlined the purposes of the curriculum framework and how it related to the overall aims of the EVE-project. The original curriculum framework was amended in the light of the evaluations received from the first exchanges, and yet the project team were still unhappy with the second version and the overall ‘outputs’ of the project.

THE NEW APPROACH

The third phase marks a significant change in the development of the project. The evaluations highlighted the different expectations of the student teachers in different countries and the difficulties with working with diverse groups of children. The main teaching resource: that of ‘assignments to be trialled’ was hugely flawed, as there were many factors which affected whether they were successful. In response to these problems the project team changed approach.

In this third phase of the project assignments would now be developed by the student teachers rather than the EVE team. To support them in collating coherent learning experiences, the EVE team compiled a series of teaching strategies – many of the chapters in this book will outline and evaluate the success of these strategies. The idea was that student teachers, working in cross-cultural pairs, would select a range of strategies, appropriate maps from the Atlas of European Values and together develop a lesson plan.

This new approach changed the value and purpose of the EVE curriculum framework. The project team felt that now the student teachers needed a document that would support them in putting together their own lesson plan. This would involve guidance on deciding on the aim and objective of the lesson, selecting appropriate maps, and finding which activities or strategies would best help them to achieve those objectives.

CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The change in approach required a change in the curriculum framework. The curriculum framework now had to set out:

- » *The learning intentions of lessons associated with the EVE-project.*
- » *The key questions that should guide that learning.*
- » *How those key questions could be broken down into questions that reflect the lesson aims.*
- » *How those lesson aims will influence the selection of maps and strategies – i.e., how the lesson planning should be undertaken.*

There are three key dimensions that influenced the changing of the curriculum framework: the first was on the changed focus of the document and how it was to be used; the second was on terminology and generating a shared understanding of that terminology with the project participants; and the third was on process, and supporting the student teachers in the process of lesson planning.

The name of the document changed. Reflecting the different purpose and use, the project team agreed that to refer to the document as ‘Principles underpinning the WW’ would be clearer as to how the document should be used.

Key terminology was highlighted: the overall aims of the project were referred to as **overarching questions**. To break these down into the relevant themes required **thematic questions**. Individual lessons should reflect these thematic questions but rely on a **lesson focus** to guide the appropriate selection of resources and pedagogy for the lesson plan.

The principles were expanded to include information that we felt was important for teachers developing their own plans and ideas. The principles now included a statement of what we understood by Europe, and how the project sought to achieve a greater understanding of Europe. This was expressed in discipline-relevant questions. The four stages of the approach to learning promoted in the project were kept from the previous versions as they reflected the learning that we wanted students to achieve, but were supplemented by a breakdown of the step-by-step process of how to plan an EVE lesson.

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE EVE-PROJECT

The maps in the Atlas of European Values are generated from the European Values Survey, and represent peoples' responses to questions about their attitudes. They show the average response for each European country. The maps offer a valuable resource for teachers who wish to explore what it means to be European. In this project Europe is viewed as a spatial entity that is produced and reproduced through the daily actions of its inhabitants. In this sense, 'Europe' is constantly produced and reproduced by Europeans. This definition does not restrict Europe to geographical or political phenomena but sees it also as a social and cultural project in space. Lessons from the EVE-project are guided by two **overarching questions** that emphasise this European dimension:

What kind of a place is Europe, and what kind of a place would you like it to be?

What kind of a society is Europe, and what kind of society would you like it to be?

To answer these questions, the EVE-project offers a number of strategies that can be used with the maps. These principles are offered to help teachers decide how to use the strategies and the maps in their lessons. The strategies represent a particular approach to learning: one that encourages discussion and debate between pupils. Such an approach is integral to learning about complex issues. We recommend that there are four stages to this approach to learning:

a) *Relating the attitudes represented in the maps of the AoEV to their own.*

Pupils should situate themselves in the discussion about different attitudes and to be able to empathise with a range of other perspectives.

b) *Describing differences (and recognising similarities).*

The maps represent average figures for each country, and such generalisations may hide (or reveal) complex differences. The strategies encourage pupils to question the data in the maps by appreciating that there are a range of viewpoints even within their own class.

c) Deepening Understanding.

Disciplinary concepts and theories deepen our understanding of why differences (and similarities) in attitudes exist. However they do not have all the answers and some theories are inadequate. Pupils should use these concepts to question the data in the maps. They are then in a position to verify and reformulate these theories.

d) Developing critical perspectives.

An individual's attitudes reflect a complex web of values and beliefs which can be difficult to unpack. Therefore to interrogate the messages within the data pupils need to appreciate the subjectivity and assumptions of the data.

THE PROJECT APPROACH RECOMMENDS THESE STEPS:

- 1. The maps in the AoEVs are organised in a series of themes. The EVE-project focusses on four themes: work, society, family, religion. To develop a lesson in the EVE-project, the theme should relate to the subject being taught. For example, in the theme of Family, a geography lesson could focus on how changes to women's working practices have changed family life. A sociology lesson however might focus on how culture influences changing family life. This could be formulated as a thematic question such as Is Europe a place where family life is changing?*
- 2. The lesson focus could also be in the form of a question. This lesson focus should be something that can be answered in one lesson, and will go some way towards answering the thematic question for example with the above thematic question, a geography lesson focus could be: Is Europe a place where people have less children? Or: Is Europe a place where people agree on the roles of men and women? A sociology lesson might ask: Is Europe a society where parents have a lot of influence on the values of children? Or: Is Europe a society where the number of children in a family is influenced by social inequality? The lesson focus should be geared towards your pupils and should interest them. It should also enable the pupils to develop an answer to the thematic question.*

3. *Select the strategies and maps. Ideally your lesson should enable students to achieve all of the four stages described above but not necessarily in that order. Shorter lessons may only feature two or three of the stages. The maps used in your lesson should be both relevant and appropriate. In order to check if a map is appropriate you should work through your lesson and evaluate what learning the pupils will achieve. For example to answer the question *Is Europe a place where people agree on the roles of men and women*, the map *'In general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers'* (<http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/map.php?id=216&lang=en>) is relevant, and might be appropriate.*
4. *Evaluate what pupils have learnt from the lesson. Did the lesson focus enable the pupils to develop an understanding of the thematic question?*

The aim is that through an EVE inspired lesson, pupils will develop a critical **understanding** of an individual's responsibilities in a diverse society and society's responsibility to the individual, and will develop a growing sense of what it means to be part of Europe's future.

Needless to say, the project team were still not convinced that this was the final version of the Curriculum Framework. We waited with anticipation to see how student teachers would react to the latest version.