THE EVE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK – DEVELOPMENTS ON THE SECOND PHASE

Clare Brooks

In the first book I outlined how the EVE project team developed a curriculum framework to support the work of the project team and the participating teachers. The curriculum framework accompanied the lesson plans as a guidance document, communicating the goals of the project, and how the lesson plans sought to achieve those goals. It was viewed as a working document, subject to revision in the light of the experience and evaluation of the first stage of the project. In the chapter that follows, I outline the evaluation results of the first set of exchanges on the theme 'work', and the subsequent revisions made to the curriculum framework.

EVALUATIONS

Pooling together the evaluations from student teachers, pupils and the project team, a number of common themes emerged from the first set of exchanges.

The first theme was the influence of the teaching context and the impact this could have on the success of the lesson plans. Participants in the exchanges reported mixed results in the light of the age of the pupils being taught, the length of the lesson and the experience of the pupils. For many the 'one-size fits all' approach of the lesson plans proved very difficult to teach, and many adaptations had to be made.

The second and third themes were related to this variety of contexts. Different contexts meant that teachers and students teachers were differently prepared to adapt and amend assignments in the light of who they would be teaching. Some teachers felt that adaption of the assignments was a normal part of a teacher's work. Others felt the assignments were authoritative, and were reluctant to make adaptations. On the whole, even when lessons were adapted for individual classes, the student teachers still reported difficulties in pitching the lesson correctly, scaffolding the activities appropriately, and teaching enough of the assignment in the time allocated in order for the lesson to make sense.

Finally, the evaluations conducted across the project also focussed on different dimensions: some explored the success of the lesson in its own right, others evaluated the lesson assignment against the project objectives.

In the light of these comments some further issues arose around the approach and nature of the project. Some of the maps were unclear and required complex 'reading' before they could be used with students. Specifically, many of the maps featured different scales and legends, making comparisons between data sets difficult. This was made especially difficult when students were not clear what they were looking at the maps for i.e.: what were the pupils going to learn, and how did this fit in with teachers' specialisms? Some participants were not clear how the lessons on (for example) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation tied in with understanding spatial patterns of work.

This issue was exacerbated by the differing expectations of the participants: to what extent were student teachers free to amend assignments? How specific were the learning outcomes and purpose of the assignments and could these be adapted? And what if the lessons did not fit in with the subject curriculums in the schools where they were being taught?

These comments seemed to emphasis an even more pressing need for a clear curriculum framework that supported student teachers working with EVE assignments. However, discussion with the project team left many issues unresolved. Cultural differences meant that expectations of teacher autonomy were markedly different. The trialling context of a class unknown to both teachers was also an issue, as was the time allocated to the EVE lessons whilst student teachers had to introduce themselves and the project before embarking on the lesson plans.

All of these comments were taken into account, and over long discussions (often well into the night!), the curriculum framework was adapted to our Version 2.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK VERSION 2

*EVE uses **disciplinary/academic** concepts (such as place, space, socialisation, and cohesion) to help pupils understand how Europeans **compare or cohese** in attitudes and values by exploring different social contexts (i.e.: work, religion, society, and family).*

*Through this analysis, pupils will develop a critical **understanding** of an individual's responsibilities in a diverse society and society's responsibility to the individual. This is an important component of values education. However, it is not about the transmission of pre-determined values, but the emphasis is on pupils questioning and clarifying their own values, and actively exploring and empathising with the values of others.*

To meet these ambitious objectives, the curriculum framework below has been designed to support teachers in constructing lessons which use the maps and data from the Atlas of European Values. This is not a prescriptive approach, but can be used and adapted to enrich most curriculum structures.

Our approach contains four stages. It is not essential for the stages to be followed

in the order below. However, in order to meet the objectives of the EVE project, all stages should be covered at some point. They are designed with a particular classroom approach in mind: one where students are actively engaged in their learning, where they feel comfortable to discuss these issues with their peers, and where they consider the lesson content to be relevant to their lives. An important dimension of this approach is the development of the pupil's metacognition.

THE STAGES

a.) *Relating the attitudes represented in the maps of the AoEV to their own. Pupils need to be able to situate themselves in the discussion about different values and to be able to empathise with a range of other perspectives.*

b.) *Describing differences (and recognising similarities) – Pupils need to be able to recognise patterns and trends as they appear in the maps of Atlas of European Values. These patterns may be, for example, spatial, social, cultural or economical, and as such pupils may require some specialist support (either through their teacher or through engagement with relevant theories and ideas) in recognising, and identifying them.*

c.) *Deepening Understanding. Academic concepts and theories deepen our understanding of why differences (and similarities) in attitudes and values exist. However they do not have all the answers, and some theories are inadequate. Therefore, this approach requires that students use concepts from academic disciplines as a lens through which they can view the data on attitudes and values. Once they have made this connection, they are then in a position to question, verify and reformulate these theories. This process we understand as argumentation.*

d.) *Developing critical perspectives. The expression of individual values and attitudes reflects a complex web of ideas and beliefs which can be difficult to unpack. Therefore to interrogate the messages within the data pupils need to comprehend its' subjectivity and to question the assumptions that may underpin it.*

MAIN CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

One of the key criticisms of the lessons was in relation to what pupils were learning. Many of the lessons in the first round of the project were focussed on reading maps. However, the participants wanted more. What was the point of 'reading' the maps,

when they raised more questions than answers? The project team felt that the answer lies in the disciplinary frameworks that guide our understanding of the world. In the redrafted curriculum framework, much emphasis is placed on these disciplinary or academic concepts both in the framework introduction and in the stages of the project. This addition required a restructuring of the stages of the curriculum framework, and a re-evaluation of the introduction. As a result, the focus and purpose of the curriculum framework was made clearer, and the stages were structured in a more logical progression.

LOOKING FORWARDS

It is safe to say, the project team were not thoroughly happy with version 2! But the notion of a working document was strongly held and the project team avowed to return to the curriculum framework in the light of the experience of teaching the assignments on 'religion'.