

Reviewing the geography curriculum in our schools: reflections by a secondary school subject leader

When Mary Myatt considers the purpose of curriculum in 'The Curriculum: Gallimaufry to Coherence' (2018) she considers the importance of planning a cohesive curriculum:

'[The purpose] links in part to curriculum cohesion in terms of supporting a framework for thinking about how it is planned and delivered – however, it is also more than this. It asks the questions, why am I teaching this lesson? What are my pupils meant to make of it? What is it for? Now when we start asking these questions, our answers tell us something very important about the nature of our planning and thinking about the curriculum...actually why am I teaching this? Where does it fit into the bigger picture of the curriculum plans? Why is it important to know this or master it? What difference would it make to the learning if we didn't do this lesson?'

Myatt also recognises the importance of a well-planned curriculum in making links clear to children. What are we trying to work out? How does it connect with past and future learning? How will children become familiar with concepts as they come across them often?

In '[Geography Through Enquiry](#)' (2013) Margaret Roberts highlights the importance of planning our curriculum so that students can make sense of their learning and making links between what they already know and what they are learning. She suggests that an enquiry approach enables our students to ask geographical questions, use evidence (with which they critically engage) to answer them and make sense of findings by developing understanding and connections.

Regarding the sometimes-contested issue of engagement and enjoyment in lessons, Myatt (2018) argues that:

'Perhaps, best of all, it injects a spirit of enjoyment into the lesson. If we can see where this links to the wider picture, we can often make other connections which make sense and are often enjoyable.'

David Leat comments upon the importance of engagement in 'Enquiry and project based learning' (2017), calling it 'a critical concept in education'. He refers to Lawson & Lawson's (2013) research into:

- affective engagement – which includes enjoyment, interest, belonging and relatedness;
- cognitive engagement - a reflection of how 'caught up' in thought and action students are during a school activity. Are they making meaning? Using metacognition? Self-regulating?
- behavioural engagement – which asks whether are students are 'on task'.

Leat supports Roberts' argument that a well-planned enquiry approach to learning in geography will lead to positive outcomes.

Catherine Owen @GeogMum /April2020

Further reading & listening on curriculum thinking and making

Geographical Association - [Curriculum planning](#)

GA GeogPod - [Episode #2](#) with Margaret Roberts

Christine Counsell – [Taking curriculum seriously](#)

Mark Enser – [Curriculum: From Hodge-Podge to Coherence](#)

Grace Healy – [Placing geography in the curriculum debate](#)

Mrs Humanities- [Creating a Coherent Curriculum: Geography](#) Mary Myatt – [Useful and Beautiful?](#)

David Lambert – [Powerful disciplinary knowledge and curriculum futures.](#)

David Lambert – [Introducing 'curriculum making'](#)

Alan Kinder – [Curriculum making: Creating an outstanding geography curriculum](#)

Mary Myatt - [The Curriculum: What to Cut?](#)

Alan Parkinson – [Curriculum thinking 2](#)

Alex Standish – [Why a Successful Geography Curriculum Needs Boundaries](#)