

Layered decision making

This introduces complexity into decision making activities, so they are more realistic and challenging. Information is provided and students make decisions based on what they know at the time. Then more information is introduced, or it changes, so more, or different, decisions must be made. It is useful for situations where there are conflicts that need to be resolved. Students can compare their decision with other groups and evaluate the pros and cons of their decisions.

Hints for managing layered decision making

- There is a good deal of preparation required because this is a complex resource; therefore, it should be a substantial piece of work to repay the preparation involved.
- The activity needs to be carefully structured and the concepts involved introduced earlier, so the focus is on the decision making
- The content and complexity means that some students may struggle and need more support. In particular, as more information is introduced students may have difficulty remembering all the factors involved and need guidance in how to record information to help them making decisions.
- Debriefing needs to take place as you go along in this activity. Discussion on the first decisions should happen before more complexity is introduced.
- This activity is well suited to introducing students to the reality that all decisions have consequences which are sometimes unintentional and unexpected. So after the first decision they must live with the consequences!
- It is a useful context for issues that have moral and ethical dimensions.
- In a complex version, groups would take different routes according to their decisions. This means that the teacher has to be “on top of” each of these and ensure they give the correct information to each group according to the decisions they take.

Reference

- Nichols, A. and Kinninment, D., (2001) *More Thinking through Geography*, London: Chris Kington Publishing.

Case studies to illustrate layered decision making

- Nichols’ examples are: moving house; the consequences of dam construction; a new stadium
- Avanesian, A. ‘Layered decision making: coastal protection along the Holderness coast’, *Teaching Geography*, Spring 2008. This example was prepared by a teacher when they were completing their PGCE. The resources can be downloaded by GA members from the *Teaching Geography* web pages.

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