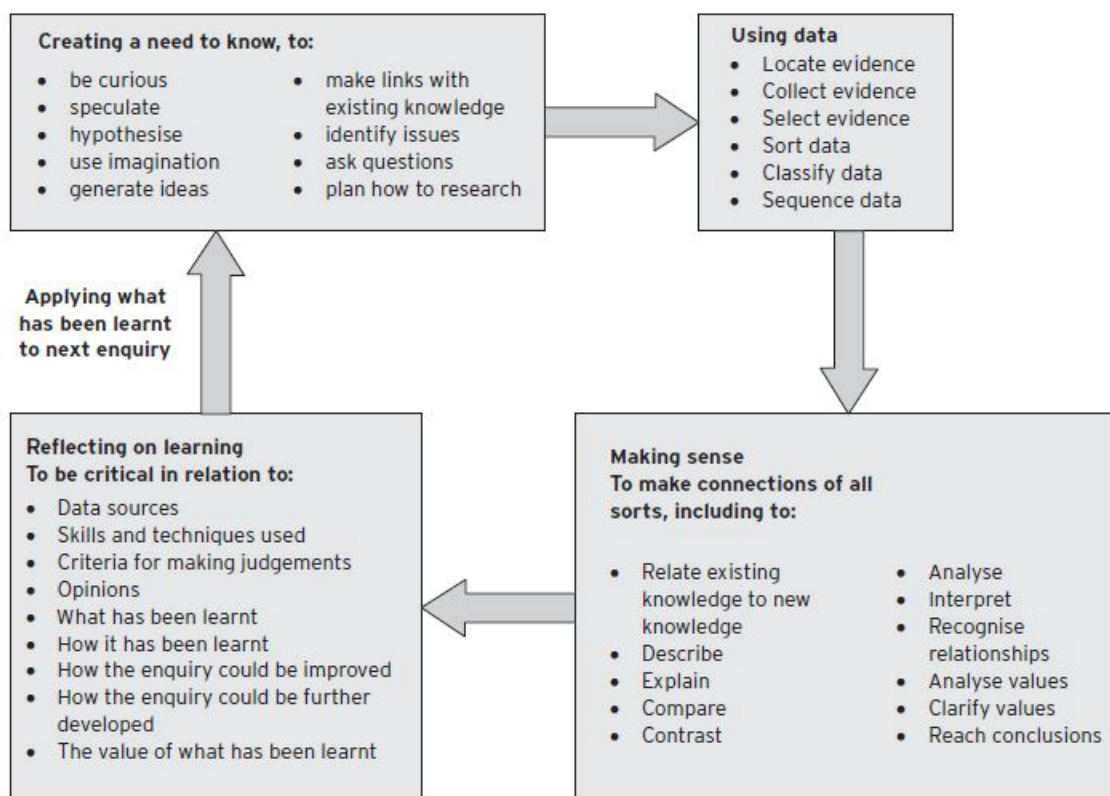


A Framework for learning through enquiry



Source: Roberts, M. (2003) *Learning through Enquiry: Making sense of geography in the key stage 3 curriculum*, Sheffield: Geographical Association

Creating a need to know

The starting point for geographical enquiries is the stimulus that creates a need to know. Enquires should encourage students to be curious, speculate, imagine or hypothesise. The early lessons in an enquiry topic should be about generating ideas and issues and making links with students' existing knowledge. The teacher might lead the questions, or students could be encouraged to formulate the questions they want to ask.

Using data as evidence

Geographical data comes in many forms, including:

- reports
- newspaper articles
- advertisements
- brochures
- photographs
- paintings
- film
- cartoons

- Google Earth
- Google Street View
- atlas maps
- OS maps
- weather maps
- statistics
- graphs
- personal knowledge
- artefacts.

You will need to select carefully what you use bearing in mind what you intend your students to learn. This element of the enquiry has a focus on developing students' skills to collect and handle these different types of data. They may already have developed these skills in other contexts or you may have to teach them.

An important aspect of geography enquiry is that students should be encouraged to challenge and question the data. This is particularly the case with information sourced via the world-wide web or data students have collected 'in the field'. In order to develop the type of skills indicated in the framework diagram, students need to use 'unprocessed' data rather than that often found in geography textbooks that has been selected, sorted, graphed and is presented with short text descriptions.

Making sense

Enquiry is not just about finding answers to questions. This stage of the enquiry framework is where students actively do something with the geographical data so that they make 'personal' sense of the information. It might involve students working in groups creating presentations for their fellow students or a wider audience; it might be an individual report.

This element of the framework is important for the quality of learning that occurs. It cannot be rushed and there should be time for substantial discussions between students and student-teacher if the enquiry is to lead to successful learning outcomes.

Reflecting on learning

This involves students asking critical questions about what they have learnt and how they have learnt it. Reflection does not always have to happen at the end of the enquiry. Students should be encouraged to evaluate the questions they asked at the start of the enquiry, and whether the data they collected were valid. They should reflect on the outcomes and how the data have been analysed and presented, as well as reflecting on how they will use what they have learnt in the future and in carrying out further enquiries.

Implementing enquiry in the classroom

The framework can be used with a very wide range of teaching approaches and activities. Read these case studies: Gemma Caudrey's article describes her enquiry-based teaching about natural hazards using three very different approaches; Lucy Mitchell describes her planning for a Google Earth enquiry.

Reading for trainee teachers and NQTs

- Caudrey, G. 'The hazards of enquiry learning', *Teaching Geography*, Spring 2010.
- Mitchell, L. 'Why use GIS', *Teaching Geography*, Spring 2010.
- Roberts, M. 'Geographical enquiry' *Teaching Geography*, Spring 2010.