

Contextualised Planning

A model for integrating the curriculum

Introduction

This paper introduces one model of planning which provides opportunities for contextualised learning, integrating curricular areas in a meaningful way. This is not a model which attempts to incorporate all curricular areas through tenuous links but rather one where experiences are dependent on each of the curricular areas having a meaningful contribution. This model also encourages a responsive approach to planning at all levels, as it is recognised that where learners have opportunities to influence their learning, there is an increase in motivation and engagement. This is clearly reflected in Building the Curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching.

“To support curriculum planning and to ensure that all learners have access to an active, enterprising learning environment, a coherent approach to planning learning, teaching and assessment and to sharing information about progress and achievement is needed.” (BtC 3)

“Planning should encourage participation by, as well as being responsive to, the learner, who can and should influence and contribute to the process.”
(BtC 3)

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When the central context for learning is being negotiated with learners, it is helpful for this to be phrased as an issue to be explored, a question to be answered or problem to be solved. This approach encourages a problem-solving and critical approach to both the direction of the plan and also the types of activities learners will experience.

From the central context for learning will emerge a number of ‘big questions’ which learners will need answered. Negotiation with learners will establish the number of ‘big questions’ and the order in which they are to be tackled.

The front page of the planner also details the attributes of the four capacities. Those attributes which will become the focus throughout the context can be highlighted.

Page 2 – Links to other themes

“Important themes such as enterprise, citizenship, sustainable development, international education and creativity need to be developed in a range of contexts.” (BtC 3)

The main components of these themes are detailed on Page 2 of the planner and those which will become a focus through the context can be highlighted.

Page 3 – Context Overview (responsive questions)

When planning a topic, helping learners to record their prior knowledge helps by establishing three important points:

- what learners know;
- gaps in learners' knowledge, understanding or skills;
- information about any misconceptions learners might hold.

Such information is important for planning purposes and allows learners to feel that they have something to offer and an active part to play in their learning. This, in turn, helps to increase interest and motivation. Strategies which can be used to stimulate and record prior knowledge include, for example, brainstorming, concept mapping, KWL grids.

There are four responsive questions outlined on Page 3 which should be answered in consultation with learners:

- What do I know already?
- What would I like to learn?
- How would I like to learn?
- How will I share my learning?

Page 4 – Planning for the big questions

Page 5 – Links to CfE experiences and outcomes

Page 4 allows practitioners to plan the learning opportunities learners will engage in to help them answer the first 'big question', with the corresponding Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes outlined on Page 5. Practitioners should indicate learning intentions and success criteria on Page 4. Practitioners should also decide which aspects will provide a focus for assessment purposes. The nature of the assessment and evidence to be gathered should be planned for and this should be indicated on Page 5. The types of activities should reflect appropriate learning and teaching approaches, for example they should:

- reflect the principles of active learning where learners are encouraged to initiate and take responsibility for their own learning, think critically and become metacognitively aware;
- allow learners to make choices about their learning based on their needs and learning styles;
- provide opportunities for collaborative working, encouraging learners to adopt different roles;
- provide real purposes and audiences;
- provide opportunities to engage with and involve the local community;
- provide opportunities to use ICT as a tool for learning;
- encourage learners to explain their thinking;
- reflect AifL strategies, where learners are encouraged to use learning intentions to peer and self-assess.

The same approach will then be adopted for the other 'big questions'.

It is important that the responsive questions are returned to throughout the context to establish whether the necessary learning has taken place.

Trevor Gray
Education Officer