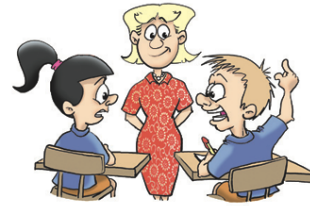


From Understanding to Critical Analysis

Some ideas for enquiry learning by Eric Frangenheim

When encouraging students to move from the Understand level of thinking to Analyse and Evaluate, the following process may prove useful.



Step 1

Start off at the Understand level by asking a question such as “what is x about?” ‘x’ could be a book, a film, an event or in fact anything worth considering in the student’s curriculum. We could use it by imagining a scenario at a staff meeting where the principal may invite some thinking concerning the school’s performance. The question to be considered by the staff could be...“What is school basically about from the perspective of our students?” After a large 2 x 2 table is drawn on the white board inviting four major comments, teachers responses could be inserted as below.

“What is school about for students”

Learning	Socialising
Handling Routine	Games

Offering 4-6 comments or even phrases or sentences as above generally leads to some understanding in response to the question just as 4-6 responses to “What was that film about?” would give us a general idea or understanding of that film. What has occurred is that we have addressed the Understanding level in terms of Bloom’s Taxonomy (cognitive).



To lift the conversation from Understand to Analyse we need to go to the next step.

Step 2

On the white board, insert two more vertical lines and four more horizontal lines to create a 4 x 6 organiser with the original responses evident.

Then explain that we are going to move from Understand to Analyse by the use of the magic word for Analyse. The question now becomes

“What is school **REALLY** about for students?”

The word ‘really’ encourages us to look beyond the initial response and encourages a broader response.

Learning		Socialising	
Handling Routine		Games	

Step 3

Ask each group of 4-6 teachers to discuss this for at least one minute with the outcome of producing at least four more responses per group. After a minute or so, ask for their responses and then enter these into the table below as such.

Learning	Rules	Socialising	Bullying
Parental expectations	Consequences	Success	Inclusion
Teachers	Teamwork	Goal Setting	Assessment
Routine	Creativity	Games	Teacher care
Adversity	Social Rules	Competition	Sport
Leadership	Cultural pursuits	Peer Pressure	Food

In a class situation, the teacher could offer more time to respond and then congratulate the students for showing more analysis of the issue and for moving away from the obvious. The organiser can be expanded to more than 24 topics or sections if necessary.

However, this only shows potential Breadth of Analysis, but nothing substantial, no real depth.

To achieve this we need to go to the next step.

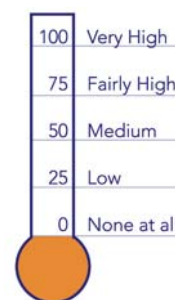


Step 4 – Looking for depth

The facilitator in the staff meeting could create a process whereby teachers are paired up and allocated one or two of the 24 topics in the table. Each pair investigates, examines or analyses each topic by means of a PCQ or a Y Chart (these are to be found in the Innovative Teachers' Companions and Reflections on Classroom Thinking Strategies).

PCQ Topic:

Pros	Cons	Questions
-	-	What if...? I wonder... It would be interesting to know...
-	-	-
-	-	-



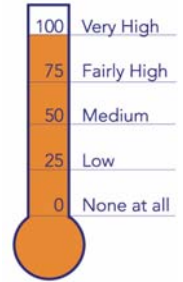
Once the PCQ is completed, each pair can take this to the level of Critical Analysis by use of the Extent Barometer assessment tool.

Based on the data in each **Pros, Cons and Questions**, each pair can make the assessment as to **what extent** the school is providing good learning, fulfilling parental expectations, preventing bullying, providing leadership opportunities etc. This means that an **Extent Barometer** can be inserted in each cell of the table by all participants, and from the evidence provided, an evaluation or assessment can be made as to how successful the school is being in providing for its students. This means that if all or most of the **Extent Barometers** have been marked in the Very High range, it is possible to create an **Overall Extent Barometer** for the whole table stating that the extent to which the school is catering for the needs of their students is Very High. Of course, in those areas where the school is scoring more Cons than Pros, these problem areas or weaknesses can also be addressed in order to improve the situation.



PCQ

What is school **Really** about for students at this school?



**Overall
Extent
Barometer**

Learning PCQ	Rules PCQ	Socialising PCQ	Bullying PCQ
Parental expectations PCQ	Consequences PCQ	Success PCQ	Inclusion PCQ
Teachers PCQ	Teamwork PCQ	Goal Setting PCQ	Assessment PCQ
Routine PCQ	Creativity PCQ	Games PCQ	Teacher care PCQ
Adversity PCQ	Social Rules PCQ	Competition PCQ	Sport PCQ
Leadership PCQ	Cultural pursuits PCQ	Peer Pressure PCQ	Food PCQ

Step 5

The principal can now take all the PCQs and Extent Barometers and create a report as to how the school is faring in relation to each of these areas.



In the classroom, students can work in teams to produce a sub set of critical analysis reports on the topic being discussed. This is in effect an exercise in critical analysis. The report could be presented as a written report, a PowerPoint Presentation, in the form of a debate or interview, as a collection of comments on each subtopic in poster form or in any other manner. Each topic in the organiser can act as a paragraph or a chapter thereby offering a structure for the report.

Conclusion

As a process for enquiry learning, these 5 steps are clearly learner-centred allowing both the teacher and students the flexibility to insert other steps such as research and criteria setting by which to judge each part of the analysis.

