Supporting students in the decision-making process

Bob Digby

GA Conference 2016
About Eduqas

• Eduqas is the new brand from WJEC, offering Ofqual reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications for first teaching from 2016

• WJEC Eduqas Geography qualifications are available to teachers in England, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands

• WJEC Geography qualifications are available to teachers in Wales

• Eduqas enables teachers to distinguish between WJEC’s current specifications, new Wales qualifications and Ofqual reformed specifications in England
Context and aims of today’s lecture

- Reformed GCSE and AS/A level geography qualifications have a greater emphasis on Application of Knowledge and Understanding (AO3 in GCSE and AO2 in AS/A level)
- Requires not just learned understanding but the abilities to analyse, evaluate and make judgements
- So – how to support students in finding effective strategies for decision making ready for the new qualifications?
- A focus upon the wider implications for teaching and learning – e.g. why we ask students to take a wider view of decision-making, or to make judgements
- Decision-making isn’t just about exams e.g. Component 2 of the new Eduqas B specification!
Decision-making as a part of geographical enquiry

• Decision-making is an integral part of an enquiry process
• All Awarding Organisations must now include aspects of decision-making, particularly as a requirement to meet AO3 in GCSE
• However, the actual decision-making process – and its assessment – is a differentiator between the USPs of particular specifications
• Adds dimension to students’ geographical education
• Contributes to the ‘real world-ness’ of Geography – its relevance to decisions made in the world beyond the classroom
### Decision-making and the new GCSE Assessment Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AO</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AO1</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of locations, places, processes, environments and different scales.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO2</td>
<td>Demonstrate geographical understanding of: 2.1) concepts and how they are used in relation to places, environments and processes; 2.2) the inter-relationships between places, environments and processes.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO3</td>
<td>Apply knowledge and understanding to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues and to make judgements.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO4</td>
<td>Select, adapt and use a variety of skills and techniques to investigate questions and issues and communicate findings.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AO3 in more detail ….

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strands</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Interpretations and definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1a – Interpret geographical information and issues.</td>
<td>Full coverage of each strand in each set of assessments (but not every assessment). A reasonable balance in each set of assessments (but not every assessment) between: interpret, analyse, and evaluate; information and issues; and make judgements.</td>
<td><strong>Interpret</strong> means describing and ascribing meaning. <strong>Analyse</strong> means deconstructing information and/or issues to find connections and provide logical chain(s) of reasoning. <strong>Evaluate</strong> means appraising and/or synthesising information and/or issues. <strong>Make judgements</strong> means coming to decisions and/or conclusions based on evidence. The emphasis here is on application – this should include (for each set of assessments) questions/tasks which require Learners to: tackle novel situations that are not clearly indicated in the specification; develop material beyond what is covered in the specification; or make links between such types of material, which are not signalled in the specification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1b – Analyse geographical information and issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1c – Evaluate geographical information and issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1d – Make judgements.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below are the assessment objectives for this specification. Learners must demonstrate their ability to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AO1</th>
<th>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of places, environments, concepts, processes, interactions and change at a variety of scales 34.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AO2</td>
<td>Apply knowledge and understanding in different contexts to analyse, interpret and evaluate key geographical information and issues 37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| AO3 | Use a variety of relevant quantitative, qualitative, and fieldwork skills to:  
  * investigate geographical questions and issues  
  * interpret, analyse and evaluate data and resource evidence  
  * construct arguments and draw conclusions 28.5% |
What is the significance of decision-making?

• Part of a paradigm of Geography that views knowledge and understanding as fluid, partial, and selective

• It has its roots in a humanistic paradigm of the subject, where knowledge is ‘obtained subjectively in a world of meanings created by individuals’ (Ron Johnston (1983) in Naish et al. (1987))

• So – if the meanings and experiences of others are important, then meaning has to be important for students too, to help them understand geographical concepts and processes
Decision-making and geographical paradigms

• A response to the positivist revolution of the 1960s and 1970s – ‘knowledge is gained through experience but that this experience must be firmly established as verifiable evidence’ – the ‘acceptance of fact is based on agreed experience’. (Johnston, 1983)

• If there is no ‘agreed’ experience because people’s views are partial or their standpoints vary, then how can teachers present different views?

• The search is therefore is not for ‘fact’ but for ways in which students interpret the world – i.e. ‘making sense’ (Margaret Roberts, 2013)

• Decision-making is therefore part of an overall philosophy of the subject and of education – about developing informed opinion.

• Not just a separate examination in a particular specification!
The roots of decision-making in schools

Early DME in exams have their roots in Schools Council projects. Its roots therefore run deep for over 40 years.

Underlying principle – that values are a fundamental component of geographical thinking; how we express preferences, or use evidence that is conditioned by our own thinking, or that of others.

16-19 Geography syllabus, London Examinations, 1986

• The provision of the opportunity to consider the significance of values in environmental decision-making, and for students to clarify and develop their own values through values-based enquiry
• An attitude of concern for the quality of physical and human environments, for the condition of human life and for the biosphere as a support system.
Principles of geographical decision-making

1. A people-environment issue or contested situation
2. A structured route to enquiry – from a question to a conclusion, via a range of data, analysis and conclusions
3. Real situations – the limited value of fictional situations, hypothetical situations (and therefore stereotypes?)
4. Real processes – e.g. an understanding of how decisions are likely to be made, by whom, and on what basis
5. Geographical implications – map-able data, patterns, relationships, impacts, solutions
6. Realistic alternatives that stand up and which can be supported – and which students access in the process of reaching a preferred outcome
7. Students begin to think like experts
Requirements of good geographical decision-making

- Varied sources, forming a range of evidence – academic / informed, journalistic, reports, surveys of opinions
- A range of reactions to the question, problem or issue – rational specialist and informed versus emotional and lay opinions
- Statistical and cartographic data, together with photos for a sense of place and context
- Various scales – e.g. local, but with global applications
- Evidence of contrasting values positions so that different players (and their motives) can be identified
- Detailed analysis of data, to move contested situations beyond simple polemic
Designing effective decision-making activities

1. A clearly people-environment issue or a problem
2. A clear proposal for change, or a proposal for a development, or analysis of an activity which is causing concern
3. A locational context
4. A clear human and (usually) physical context – e.g. distribution maps of an activity, and/or statistics
5. Environmental context – real places, real photos, maps, sketches so that the issue can be placed
6. A personal context – real quotes by real people and organisations

Range of opportunities for group work, role plays, displays, web site development, GIS
Decision-making as a **process**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 ➔</th>
<th>2 ➔</th>
<th>3 ➔</th>
<th>4 ➔</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify a problem or a need, or a proposal</td>
<td>Identify different proposals / solutions / options</td>
<td>Weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each; who gains? who loses?</td>
<td>Reach a decision and judge for whom that decision might be best</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stages are not separate, but linked into a **sequence** – it’s important to go through that sequence.
However ….

1. Combining these stages into one enquiry is time-consuming – for teachers to develop, and for lesson time in a busy curriculum
2. As examinations, they may promote a message that these are ‘special events’ rather than an intrinsic part of geographical learning
3. Lack of examples (other than past exam papers) and shorter versions in some textbooks

So it’s important to use the processes of decision-making in class – as part of mainstream lessons or part of the process of understanding conflict

e.g. in lesson openers and main activities: use of photos, or data, or people’s viewpoints, conflict matrices etc.
E.g. Using photos to identify an issue

- Have they always lived here?
- Who owns the land?
- Who lives here?
- Where is this?

- Isn't it dangerous here near the railway?
- Could people change this place if they wanted to?
- Did people here have any choice about where to live?
- Do people like living here?
E.g. Using data to pose questions

Who gets what?

- How do coffee growers feel about this?
- Should shares be allocated in this way?
- How fair is this?

What are ‘expenses’ and who gets them?

- 25% Grower
- 7% Transport
- 8% Roasting and bagging
- 5% Labels and bags
- 30% Expenses
- 25% Retailer

Is this a good business to be in?

Do workers on coffee estates share in the 25% for growers?

How do supermarket workers feel about this?
My great-grandmother came from Bethnal Green, and moved from working in London to Tilbury Docks. I think it’s a good thing their East End has gone – it was unremitting poverty.

Essex is now the home of the East End as all the original East End people have moved out – Romford Market is where you will find true East End people. Not Newham or Tower Hamlets!

Born and bred in the East End (Poplar and the Isle of Dogs). Moved away but like a magnet it keeps drawing me back. Unfortunately I just can’t afford to move back here.
E.g. Learning how to ‘making a case’

- ‘Making a geographical case’ for a decision
- Often the best place to start is with **economic**, **social** and **environmental** factors:

| Economic | • Jobs, employment, higher incomes  
|          | • Higher skilled, higher paid jobs  
|          | • Increase in GDP  
|          | • Making an area more attractive to investment |
| Social   | • Improving people’s lives and quality of life  
|          | • Better housing, reducing crime  
|          | • Improved health and education  
|          | • Greater cultural understanding |
| Environmental | • Improving air and water quality  
|             | • Reducing pollution levels  
|             | • Protecting / conserving wildlife / biodiversity  
|             | • Improving the built environment |
E.g. Exploring and applying big concepts: sustainable development

- The idea of sustainable development provides ‘hooks’ for analysing proposals or issues
- It can help students to make, and explain, a decision
- Can be taught as either a ‘stool’, ‘quadrant’, or Egan’s wheel
Some foundations for decision-making …

Suitable ways to target decision-making skills with students could include the following activities in teaching topics across the specification:

1. Analyse the impacts on …
2. Weigh up the advantages / disadvantages of ..
3. Discuss the points of view of …
4. What are the limitations of?
5. To what extent do you agree?
6. Which is the best option?
7. Justify your decision / choice.
8. What are the costs and benefits?
9. How might things change in the future?
10. What might be the consequence?
11. What ought to happen …?
12. Who should…?

Less focus on learning facts related to case studies.
More emphasis on
- Interpretation
- Analysis
- Appraisal
- Making decisions
- Justification
### Summary: what are good decision-making skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANGE</th>
<th>USE EVIDENCE</th>
<th>BALANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be able to analyse advantages and disadvantages – e.g. costs / benefits, good / bad, positive / negative impacts</td>
<td>Give extended and detailed evidence to support a case using detail data (both hard and soft) instead of vague assertions.</td>
<td>Be able to see all sides of a people-environment issue and accept that no solution is a catch-all or is problem-free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BE SYNOPTIC</th>
<th>COUNTER-ARGUMENT</th>
<th>REACH A JUDGMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use knowledge and understanding from other topics in Geography, from the news, or from other subjects</td>
<td>Be able to explain why some proposals or ideas have been rejected</td>
<td>DECIDE! Be able to put together a logical case that is linked to evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion: the significance of decision-making

Decision-making as part of a broader political education:

“… there is an important emphasis on the development of students as responsible and competent individuals who are capable of playing a participatory role in society. In this sense, one of the aims of enquiry-based learning in Geography is to help develop political literacy.”
(Naish et al. 1987, p50-51)

"Only if we conceive of the future as open can we seriously accept or engage in any genuine notion of politics."
(Doreen Massey ‘For Space’, 2005)
Questions?
Any Questions?

Contact GCSE Geography Subject Officer:

Andrew Owen
andrew.owen@eduqas.co.uk

Follow on Twitter:
@eduqas

Visit the website:
www.eduqas.co.uk