

Mantle of the Expert in Worcester

What have we been up to since 2006? Well lots.....

1. We have infected the system by gentle persuasion and with due regard to DH's stringent procedures. Teachers up and down the country are embarking on new adventures with their classes and of course this is good news. However we are beginning to realise that with the release of the system into the country and abroad we have to be vigilant as far as the quality of the work we use is concerned.
2. Mantle of the expert is having a 'hey day' it is true-BUT MoE is going being described under several guises! One hears: 'Oh they were mantling this morning' or 'The Greeks-oh yes we did a sort of mantle on it where the class had to make a Greek vase out of our clay we have near the school and pretend they were villagers in Greece when the parents day was organised.....' Whilst we can all be sure the people concerned were very well meaning declaring their allegiance to the system-unfortunately this does more harm than good.
3. Our discoveries so far are that the MoE system is an exacting one. It requires a very definite orientation by us as teachers to enquiry learning as a starter then to understand how the muses surrounding drama for learning can be summoned and then the challenges of tuning learning contexts within the landscape of MoE AS A SYSTEM! No wonder people want to 'short circuit' their dialogue. However we would want to urge all people present to be vigilant and see their

journeys ahead as a terrific opportunity to develop in themselves a way of teaching that that gives us an almost unlimited choice-and forever.

4. We have also discovered that those using the system or hearing about it are moved by the central premise that using MoE can shift the unearthly feeling in many of us that there is something deeply wrong in our 'schooling' of children with the sure knowledge that doing the same better is not an option any more. What of course excites people even more is that with the use of MoE procedures teachers HAVE TO do things differently. Professional imposition is replaced by skilled professional structuring with students, instruction processes are replaced by induction sequences, teachers objective lead curriculum learning transforms into student defined learning.
5. So for those of us who are still wondering what MoE is all about-all I can do is give a little insight into what I have discovered in my journeys with 'fellow travellers' based on the seeds I discovered in 1982 when I completed my Masters degree with Dr Heathcote-who luckily for me-had begun the deep reflective work on her wonderful invention- of a genius that many brilliant minds throughout the globe have hailed time and time again.
6. Like surgeons learning from a brilliant research medic-we have the benefit of being able to support many more teachers use the system we can now call Mantle of the Expert.
7. Students learn to harness their imaginative narratives in their heads to initiate with a teacher or skilled 'other' a fictional world that begins to entwine their faculties for learning.

8. As each responsible group invents their ways forwards-young people are confronted by dilemmas and challenges that take them into learning as much defined by the class as by the teacher.
9. The teacher skill is about their capacity to invent and harness their own creativity with young people. So for example-the class are to begin to investigate a science domain-that of habitats and classification of species. Geography is to be harnessed as well as the teacher wants the class to look at an unfamiliar region of the world-in Mary's case-South America. Also she is keen to ensure that there are opportunities for writing, imagining, planning, talking, working as a team, making decisions, solving dilemmas as they arise, sharing thinking with others and being challenged are all part of the mix. Mary is no different to most teachers I work with. What makes Mary unusual is that she is developing her skills in MoE. This she knows will make it possible for her vision of the curriculum to be a reality. It is another discovery we have made-even embarking a little into understanding the system transports teachers.
10. Mary's inventions.....by the way I am NOT saying Mary's inventions are perfect-as she is attempting as a teacher/artist to move towards excellence and NOT perfection.
11. In her plan Mary was aware of her class in her head-and asked herself the question-what will interest them? Answer-travel, adventure, danger, imagining, drawing, making, looking up strange places and things in books especially in picture form, strange maps and mysteriousness.

12. So what does she invent? A team of people who have the responsibility of breeding endangered South American animals on an island that is currently uninhabited! Now I am not saying every one thinks this way- but it does say a lot about how this teacher tried her hardest to fit the curriculum to her children-a giant step in PL!
13. She needed an island-the question was at the time-an island that exists already-or an island imagined in the minds of the class and their invention? Mary chose an existing island-Uttila Island off the coast of Honduras. In doing so many opportunities were closed to the class-creating their own island-creating the client with the teacher, linking their discoveries with other evidence and so on. BUT on the other hand many areas of learning were opened up-examining an island in detail that exists and raising questions about its ecology and human interventions, whether the island was suitable for the creatures that were to be bred, what sorts of shelter could we build that would be in keeping with the island? She needed a point of view as well-in other words what possible view point could the class have that would spark them off? Well-people who breed animals to help them survive as a species seemed one worth working on. The class were to take the responsible position in their minds as animal scientists who breed creatures in need of human intervention to survive. However the question was now-what are the creatures that need such attention from humans? This lead into a fascinating process where the class began to investigate the inquiry questions emerging from the learning landscape planned.

14. Now as Mary was using MoE as a system she knew she needed a 'client'. The client offers in MoE a significant key learning ingredient- that of 'they who need to know how we are getting on'. This transforms experiences from events occurring to events needing to be recorded reported and assessed FOR THE NEEDS OF THE CLIENT. In this case Dr Abbott from the World Wildlife Fund. In the workshops today I hope you might ponder on the question that Mary asked-what is the difference between the teacher 'role playing' and the teacher 'in role'? It may sound like splitting hairs-but struggling with this concept is at the heart for the transformation of power to influence passed to classes.
15. But-where to start? In a way-starting is the wrong word-but like Dr Who-we appear to be in the middle of things RIGHT AT THE START! So an entry that goes like-[DEMO ADMIN PERSON NEEDING THE LIST OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD THEIR INJECTIONS FOR TYPHOID]
16. One of the biggest lessons I learnt at Newcastle was the power and skill needed to select the RIGHT language-WORDS that carried the experience forwards into complexity. I learnt to listen VERY carefully at the beginnings of work with Dr Heathcote and learnt that CONTEXT was everything.
17. Such strategies take us to the heart of the landscape to come-because of course the teacher can switch between FICTIONAL POINT OF VIEW and OTHER POINTS OF VIEW to suit her purposes. For example-the class view their work as students in the class! (Just as I am doing now!!)

18. As we all make our attempts to experiment in classes with the system I urge us all to remain vigilant to the quality of our ongoing understanding and adopt the means to remain life long learners of MoE at the heart of what many of us believe is possible to heal a very sick education system.

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