


How do students develop skills for enquiry and critical thinking?

Research taster

Teachers can support the development of skills for enquiry and critical thinking through the use of new technologies in the history classroom.  For example pupils developed:

- their understanding of how castles changed over a period of time by using a database to find answers to a given set of questions.
- their skills to evaluate sources of evidence by choosing from a set of resources saved on the intranet by their teacher.
- an understanding of multiple interpretations by exploring contemporary writings on the American Indians that were available on the internet.

Your evidence

You might find it helpful to investigate the ways in which your students search for understanding when they are learning. Perhaps you could observe a small group of students working to evaluate a variety of evidence sources made available to them electronically and consider whether:

- the participants take turns or do they frequently talk over each other or interrupt?
- they invite contributions, redirect contributions for further comments, and give encouragement?
- they listen to each other and are they willing to learn from each other?
- they indulge in 'parallel' talk (i.e.: continue their own line of thinking)?
- conflict emerges and how it is handled?

(Adapted from Reflective Activity no. 13-2a on the Reflective Teaching website at: <http://www.rtweb.info/content/view/375/48/>)

Moving forward

Now you have looked at the types of conversation taking place in small group work you might like to think about how you could extend your students' speaking and listening skills. Could you develop a talking frame would help students to structure their discussions when collaboratively evaluating sources of evidence? Would you find it helpful to investigate how different group dynamics affect the types of discussion taking place?

Find out more

The full project is InterActive Education: teaching and learning in the information age set out to answer a big question lead by Prof. Rosamund Sutherland, Prof. Susan Robertson, and Prof. Peter John. The project website is at: <http://www.interactiveeducation.ac.uk/>