

30 years in the making

1974-2004

The Mantle of the Expert

A system for learning through the
active imagination and enquiry
methodology.

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Mantle of the Expert.

Establishing procedures and implementing the style and possibilities for developing standards and progression.

When considering this form of curriculum teaching it may be useful if the teacher holds the image of a flowing system – as of a river, tributaries feeding in, and an estuary where all the different aspects of the work achieved come to a conclusion of wide and inter-related understanding of the many strands of enquiry and skill. The length, speed of flow and depth of each ‘tributary’ aspect will depend upon the particular curriculum needs demanded by the specific Mantle of the Expert enterprise selected by the teacher.

There are seven aspects which sustain the enterprise. These inter-relate and flow into each other throughout the entire teaching process.

The conventional image of curriculum work is more akin to a highway, or railway links where one ‘solution’ follows another in linear format. This form of progression often appeals to teachers because it seems more controllable and orderly as different aspects require to be introduced, but the linear format does not achieve holistic understanding of curriculum and skills.

The seven elements which are mandatory in sustaining the Mantle of the Expert.

7: Teacher sustains language from within the fiction; can work in roles well as a teacher /colleague and regulator of quality behaviour

6: The progressing of the work is based on doing tasks, supported by the teacher's inventiveness, alongside the children

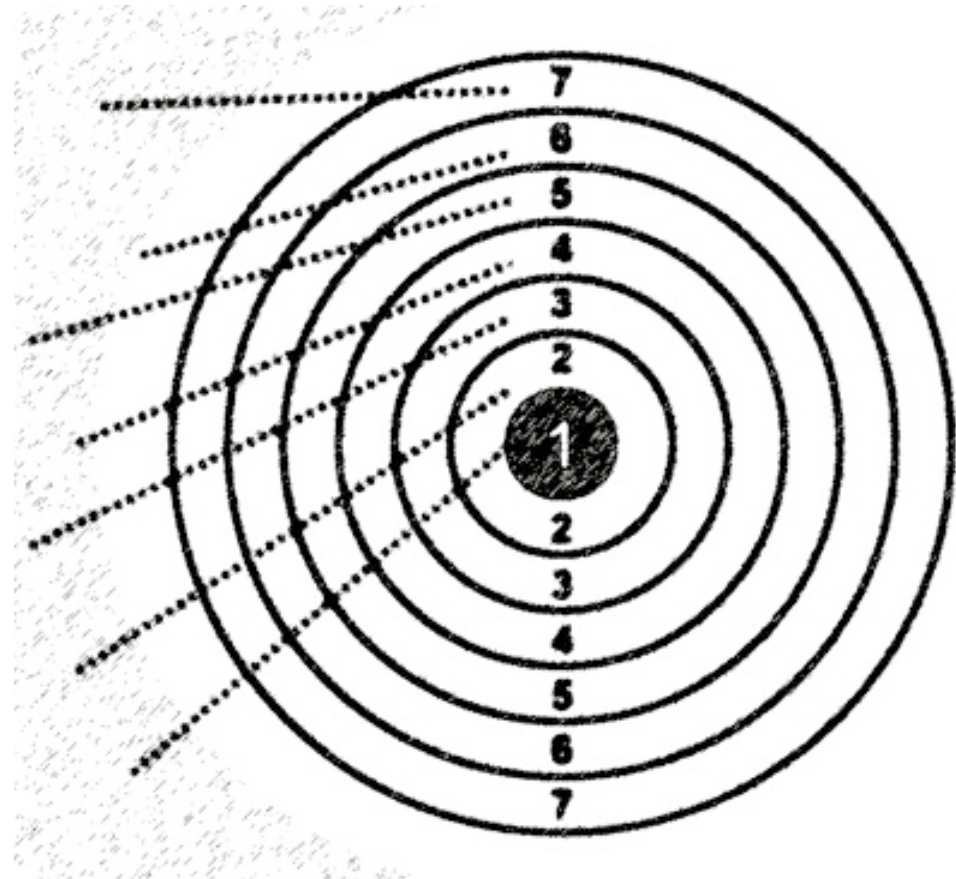
5: The mandatory elements begin to be established to engage the curriculum firmly and at relevant levels

4: The enterprise (as in all theatre) starts in the middle so there will be Historical elements of the enterprise

3: Establishing a sense of purpose is created by the sense that we are working for 'clients'

2: The enterprise has been selected to provide mandatory access to the curriculum

1: Behaving 'as if' produces 'now-time' of theatre and drama elements of deep play



The 1st circle.

The teacher must establish behaving the 'as if we are experts' elements in the work. This changes thinking and learning about things, to that of thinking from within the matters of concern. It involves taking decisions about matters as they arise when the enterprise begins to engage the curriculum study. This introduces the 'now-immediate' time of theatre. 'We do'. All students work from the same point of view. They work in the frame of persons running or organising some form of establishment. This forms the boundary and the potential of the studies the teacher wishes to undertake in collaboration with students.

Behaving 'as if' we organise and develop the work of an establishment invokes the first drama element. We 'put on' a point of view which normally is not evident in the work of students. This becomes a contract to behave a 'doers now', taking all the responsibilities for decisions. This opens up the legitimacy of trial and error, and learning from failure. These permit self correction and critical review in participants as they develop the work.

The teacher participates as a firm leader, sustaining this behaviour of 'we do all our work from within the responsibilities of the enterprise'. All students and teachers recognise that the enterprise is invented to everyone to sustain the fictional enterprise. What actually happens is that the enterprise begins to be truthful and sustained organically through all the developing facets the enterprise demands. Children enjoy taking on responsibility because the element of play is inherent in all the work. It is this which releases students from the fear of penalty which usually dogs school work. The responsibility for serving the needs of their clients imposes the dignity of standards, and feeling that their work is important to others as well as themselves.

The 2nd circle.

Selecting the enterprise to provide mandatory controls and access to selected curriculum.

There are 8 kinds of enterprise each of which engages a different type of client, and thus different demands are made upon the thinking, language and research skills of the teacher and students. In particular, attitudes and point of view vary but never the need of standards and responsibility. The 8 types are:

Servicing enterprises – bank, library, hospital, fire station, post office etc;

Manufacturing – factories, a dairy, a bakery, fashion house, herb garden, cars etc;

Charitable – OXFAM, Red cross, Greenpeace, National trust, English Heritage etc;

Nurturing circumstances – hospice, orphanage, gene or blood bank, nature reserve, zoo, animal sanctuary, safe house, library, council office etc;

Regulatory situations – police stations, tax and immigration offices, prisons, law courts, armed forces, housing authorities, customs and excise, harbour authorities etc;

Maintenance enterprises – plumbers, electricians, joiners, archivists, stone masons etc;

Arts establishments – theatre, photographic studios, film makers, art gallery, ballet and dance companies, museums, craft workshops, architects' business etc;

Training establishments – any learning programmes related with human endeavours. The students would plan the training not function as students come to learn.

Each of these will draw on and release the need of curriculum skills and knowledge, varying in order and emphasis. The teacher selects the enterprise which most invokes the teaching goals. All will make demands on language-speaking, reading, writing in a variety of forms and styles. Likewise all in a variety of ways will require Numeracy, mathematics and computing skills. All demand social collaboration and the development of the culture of the enterprise in fulfilling its purpose.

In making the choice of enterprise the teacher will consider short and long term learning goals, the present needs of the class as they embark upon developing their enterprises, and the variety of strategies to be used to best serve the learning.

Each enterprise reveals the social health of the class of students. Some will require to participate in situations where they can learn to help each other. Sometimes dealing first with things helps them to collaborate – assembling something, or making labels, or badges to be planned together and worn. The teacher is usually in a position to judge where students can begin from strength, and what attitudes dominate during other kinds of work.

Each enterprise creates invented mind-clients. It is the client element which begins the process of maturation – of attitudes, of responsibility for servicing their clients' needs; of wanting to do their best for their clients. This further engages them in the research and skills essential to the enterprise becoming truthful, even though teacher and students all realise they are the inventors and sustainers of the developing 'field' the enterprise encourages.

The 3rd circle.

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The teacher needs to launch the enterprise as if it already has a history and at this point some new element is to be developed. Maybe a new client, or a change of building location or new arrangements inside. A useful model here is that of a theatre: the playwrights take up the actions and dilemmas of the people in the play at a point of significance. This then drives the action forward. In 'Hamlet', for example, his father is already dead under suspicious circumstances, so events must proceed from Hamlet's responsibilities and doubts about his father's demise and his mother's re-marrying with Claudius. Theatre and 'Mantle of the Expert' work thus share this common purpose, that of doing, in now immediate times, that which is imperative to achieve. There is one radical difference, the playwright begins from a feeling or psychological basis, whereas 'Mantle of the Expert' begins with organisation and tasks. Thus, talent for acting is never a factor. Feeling and emotional involvement grows through caring for and commitment to the clients and belief in the enterprise. It is this which opens the gate of study, research, mastery of skills and dignity of responsibility. Thus a natural affinity to self regulated play emerges and students can enter the enterprise at individual levels of skills, information and social health.

There is no acting out of a hierarchy of roles and 'parts' as in a play. The enterprise demands that all are driven from the same responsibilities to launch the necessary tasks. At first these may appear trivial or peripheral. As for the example the work with the great Shire horses in the video tape begins with all students cleaning out the mornings dirty straw and preparing new bedding. From here there arises naturally the inspection of working horse's feet and the necessary measurement of standing height related with shoe size and fitting systems. From this tiny entry all the Victorian Brewery stables emerge into focus. The preliminary thinking was a necessary precursor – that of naming 'huge' working horses, and studying illustrations of large working horses, which these days may be unfamiliar to children. 'Placing the names' created the stable area so an inside and outside view became apparent, ie: the stables are but one aspect of a large brewery.

During this early stage the teacher is modelling behaviour and attitude as well as selective language and body signing. The language is always now, immediate, collegueness, and task orientated. This sustains the acts and beliefs of the children as they are 'collected' in to the life of the stable.

Alongside the behaviour aspects in sustaining belief, is the way the classroom or working area is transformed by 'sign' – those elements which make significance and define the work of the enterprise. There is no necessity to completely alter the space – 'in fact a classroom space often supports the tasks needed by the enterprise more than a large area which may lack ordinary tables, desks or chairs which can be re-organised to suit the 'expert' tasks. The invented workspace will use all the normal curriculum tools – pens, crayons, paper, research materials, computer records and announcements so all display areas are fully used. Children, as they begin to behave responsibly, carrying out their establishment tasks, create personal mind pictures of how the surroundings would be, so they use this internal picture in negotiating around available space and adapting available furniture to their needs at any moment.

The 'sign' which supports the tasks will be easily contrived so that all participants can recognise where things are. 'Place messages here' or 'Tools must be cleaned before being replaced'. The type of enterprise will regulate which general locations are essential and teacher and students will collaborate in deciding content, style and placing.

The 4th Circle.

Establishing the Enterprise through tasks.

The general scope of a working establishment is like all the particles held inside a 'snowstorm glass globe'. Each individual flake represents a feature of the enterprise coming into focus as the work develops to meet learning and curriculum work. As the snow globe is moved to activate flakes they fall to create and reveal a unique landscape which then is explored for learning. Each shake of the globe is like an episode affecting all participants which the teacher can introduce at relevant times to the progressing of work and interest.

In starting the enterprise then, one strand will be chosen that can set off the chain of all the other episodes and form a central key to unlock all the landscapes available from the particular 'Mantle of the Expert'. In creating the brewery enterprise which would lead to the disaster and subsequent aspects of the village life and history, the great Shire horses were selected as the key task which was choosing names for all the mighty gentle giants. When names were selected they were written large and with the best lettering the students could manage at first. These names when placed around the classroom, establishes the place where each horse lived when not handling wagons or at rest in the brewery fields. These spaces became places for many stable responsibilities to take happen. Cleaning out and replenishing straw, hoof and shoe inspection for hard work on granite cobblestones, the locations of hay rations and collars and harnesses for fitting each horse, the cleaning of 'protective' brasses worn when working, locations of birds' nests in the stable eaves – swallows, swifts and house martins. Thus the river model creates the volume elements in horse management. It is to this volume element, where many facets are carried in the minds of the stable staff which creates an almost awesome sense of responsibility in the students as they develop caring and standards.

The teacher decides how 'looking after horses' can provide entry into the disciplines most desired. Veterinary disciplines demand anatomy, technical drawing, art studies, literary texts, exact descriptions of symptoms or treatment, writing reports, issuing instructions to horse carers

and wogonners, technical vocabulary of the parts of the horse, feeding, hygiene, exercise and training for hauling loads and good discipline, as well as 'dressing' for special events such as parades, and the different records of each horse will be created especially by each carer. This involves designing such systems and typing out the designs in practice.

In the case of the disaster, another tributary of the volume 'flow' will be all those aspects related with public grief and responsibility. Monuments, ceremonies, remembrance systems, keeping records, writing newspaper reports, horse minder's memories, myths told and re-told over time, burial areas, designing gravestones and plaques, insurance company enquiries and forms, a book of the disaster written later. The teacher introduces those aspects to suit the learning and skills development. All tasks grow from within the life of the enterprise developing from the context which is driven from the caring of the community and horse managers. The context provides a point of view: we are responsible because we agree to behave 'as if' these horses are part of our lives, rather than do exercises in writing to please the teacher.

We may also create materials so that other people will be able to know how life was at that time: deliver lectures about the fire service in 1860, the design of breweries at the time, worker's pay and conditions. Throughout Mantle of the Expert work students are functioning actively in iconic, symbolic and expressive modes. It is NOT DESK BOUND, nor is it pen and paper work merely. The variety is created because the client, the type of audience, and the purpose of the work creates constant shifts in presentation, research, and the type of occasion which needs the material. The range depends upon the capacity of the teacher to explore the 'snow landscapes' of each Mantle of the Expert enterprise, and will include theatre, production, script writing and demonstrations for clients if so required.

THE SUN CIRCLE.

All Mantle of the Expert establishments require boundaries of time and scope.

Mandatory elements will be set in and may not be questioned. This is the teacher's responsibility when planning. The mandatory elements create the disciplines within the work and cause the materials, not the teacher authority, to mediate behaviour of those running the enterprise. The boundaries of the work are set in at the point of the initial request from the client and the invitation creates the possible curriculum activity required by the teacher. The invitation from an outside client, which may be invented by the teacher and recognised as such by the class, must be presented authentically with internal coherence. All aspects of the initial invitation should 'hang together' and each part supports all other aspects. When all is presented coherently the invitation feels 'believable' and the students can then agree that 'we will work 'as if' we are really running this enterprise on behalf of our clients who have made the request'.

The mandatory preparations and their form can be as simple or complex as the teacher finds necessary and within the time and resources available. With experience teachers will find they require to provide fewer and fewer pre-formulated materials. A simple broom held with the attitude of a responsible worker can start a believable stable enterprise provided the teacher carefully signs the role, using talk, vocabulary and body language to key the workers into 'what is happening here', and who our clients are. A key board for drawing staff car keys gives an interesting task for each individual and provides status and choice of cars! An in /out board or gate keeper (the teacher) will build belief in security and rights of access. A name badge individually filled in will give the opportunity and authorisation of staff to 'work here'. On the other hand if the teacher wishes to lay in more challenging mandatory elements from the very beginning these require more detailed preparations so they can serve precise and complex purposes. If a stable needs to be rebuilt for the client, then exact architectural plans and instructions will be required. ????? Financial and time restrictions may be registered. There may be introduced: elements such as a listed building, or the preservation of a monument within the structure, and even a particular architectural style to be demanded. These will be

selected strictly to service what the teacher intends the mantle of the expert enterprise to achieve. No matter how it is initiated it will open up responsibilities and a range of simple and more and more complex tasks and will always invite strong drama and expressive elements. These will naturally arise because everyone is engaged in 'behaving as if we are 'working within the limits our client has stipulated.

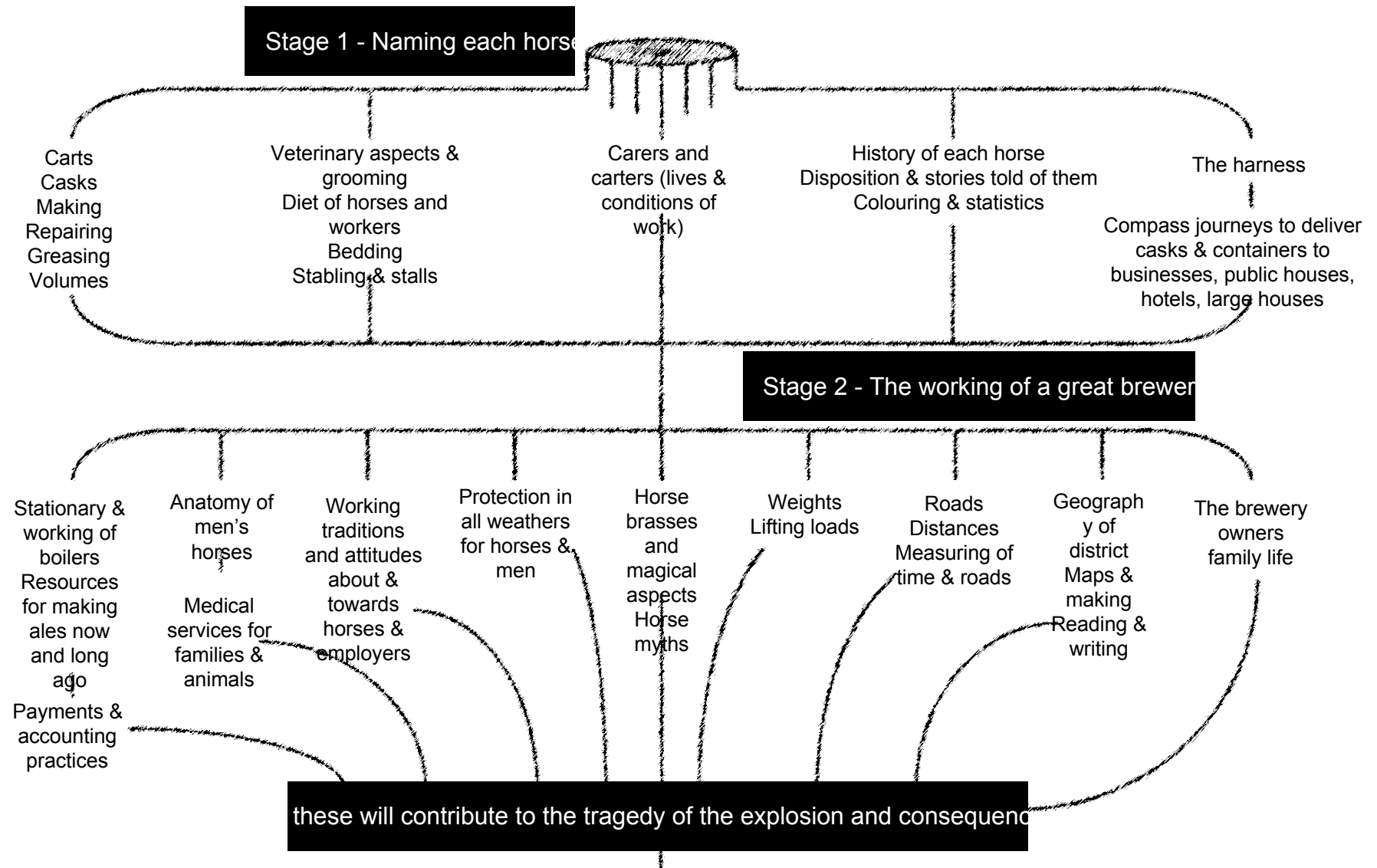
The 6th circle – part A.

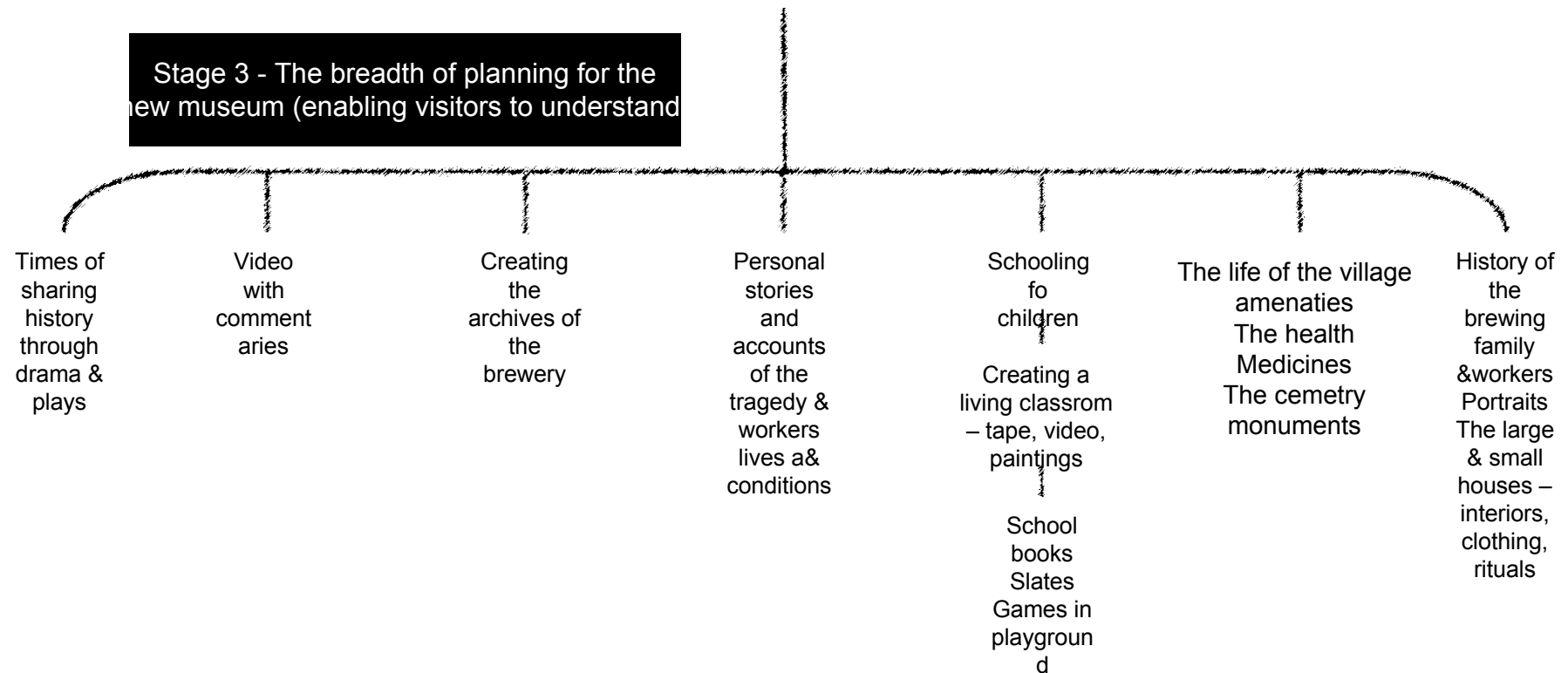
Progressing and deepening the work, whether short or long time of ????

The teacher constantly selects from the curriculum possibilities of the chosen enterprise. The students' concern drives the study forward and the teacher sustains challenges, feedback and assists in keeping a record system of all work. Much written work of varying lengths and styles is generated and there must be constant client pressure for clarity, in language, appropriate presentations and forms of spoken communication. It is the teacher's responsibility to devise the kinds of active tasks which enable students to explore and learn in ever increasing and challenging ways. These tasks will be many and varied, some using small groups, others needing all students to plan and collaborate as one large team. There is an excellent palette of choice which can be tailored to each student's capacity and levels of skill. The range and vitality grows as students take on more and more responsibility for the decisions and become engaged with accuracy, layout, presentation in many forms, and above all, feel they care about their enterprise and for their clients. It is the envisaged clients (and the teacher will be constantly representing them in various ways) the presence and influence of their demands which makes the imperative to achieve. Each tributary of input blends and merges with all the other currents contributing the enterprise.

In the stables and the brewery boiler burst there are at least three main strands – the horse management, the place of the brewery and its impact upon the community right through the strata's of society, and the requirements of the clients to teach via a museum understanding of the lives of the people to generations who should know something of the powerful and tragic influences of a remarkable and all too frequent hazards of our Industrial Revolution. The teacher will select the tasks from these three strands based upon the student's need to know, readiness to work at the necessary skills and the curriculum areas to be studied.

Using the river model, the first 'spring' discussed in the video tape is the naming of each horse which then emerges as the personal responsibility of each stable worker at this stage. This spring releases further tributaries of study.





Thus we can discover the wide range of tasks open to the teacher in forwarding the learning and skills which can be worked at in any rational order from the three shapes. For example the owning brewery family history may appeal to some teachers because of their expertise, while studying a geographical area (including inventing a landscape and a scale map). A ‘mantle of the experts’ enterprise may start at any point in the culture of a community, but NOT THE DISASTER ENACTMENT ITSELF. This, to have any depth of experience, must lead out of responsibility of all students towards the community and their lives.

The 6th circle – part B.

The range of tasks and variety of presentations required by the museum creators.

Research tasks: discovering resources, note taking, interrogating texts and pictures.

Sorting and organising: divisions of teams, defining responsibilities ????? sequences for visitors, keeping records.

Testing out tasks & trial and error: *predicting planning and trying out various ideas – making judgements to variety of communication systems and testing them.*

Explaining ideas and tasks to each other, the client, and museum visitors – *selecting appropriate @voices' and vocabulary, including art, sound, video, photography ????? lectures and guides.*

'Showing' tasks: *considering purpose's to give facts to intougne, to provoke concern, to abuse interest, to raise issues and questions and create exhibitions.*

Forms of explaining facts to create understanding: *written materials, design of handouts “sound” images, diagrams, diomatic explanations, puzzles, games for visitors, a wall of tapestry, paintings the family history to read about, or see a video, or an art gallery of portraits showing life and work conditions, the factual history of brewery, family trees of poor and wealthy in the community newspaper accounts at the time of the disaster, achieves, personal correspondences stories remembered and passed down, churchyard and monuments, lawyers documents, creating “old” documents – of apprenticeships, death, birth, wedding certificates, architectural drawings and specification s – of carts, buildings, tools, uses, forms.*