

Developing Teachers of Inquiry: An emerging Humanities Model of Inquiry (HMI)

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Debra is passionate about connecting curriculum to the life-worlds and futures of students. She is very concerned about current moves to return to very classical modes of disciplinary curriculum, especially for the Primary School.

Abstract: Inquiry pedagogies have been an integral mode by which understandings connected to the Humanities have been developed in primary classrooms. For the purposes of this paper, the Humanities incorporates areas of learning associated with Civics & Citizenship, History, Geography and Economics. In primary classrooms, these discipline areas have often been taught in interdisciplinary ways through other iterations such as Social Studies and Studies of Society and Environment. This paper is a reflection on the work with pre-service teachers in a quest to disrupt more traditional and transmissive pedagogies for teaching and learning in this area. It proposes a new way of conceptualising inquiry for rigorous and disciplinary learning.

Inquiry pedagogies and other forms of interdisciplinary learning are increasingly identified as effective means by which young people are most able to make important connections between what it is that they do in the primary

classroom and what it is that occurs within their lifeworlds (Bateman, 2012). In Australia, there are a variety of specific models of this type of approach, but in general they are based around four key phases of learning engagement. The abundance of pedagogical models might suggest that it is with some semblance of ease that Australian teachers implement this strategy into their classrooms. However, we suggest that an inquiry approach challenges pre-service teachers to work in very different ways to the ways they have been “taught to learn” in schools. Further, we argue that an effective inquiry approach is more than the adoption of a model, or even a command of content knowledge, but rather it is a philosophical and affective commitment to a way of learning.

This paper is a reflection of what occurs in one teacher education curriculum, as a way of explicitly positioning pre-service teachers as enablers of young people’s inquiring minds. In our primary teacher education courses, it is contended that the curriculum that is enacted in schools should be relevant and meaningful in the lives of children, and build on what some (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) refer to as funds as knowledge, or the virtual schoolbags (Thomson, 2002) they bring to every learning experience. This is our philosophical position, based on a commitment to powerful learning and teaching in a classroom that reflects critical theories informed by the likes of Marcuse (1937/1989), Giroux (2005), Habermas (1991), Freire (2005) and Hooks (1994)

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A brief overview of Inquiry pedagogies

In Australia, four dominant inquiry models are used in schools. The 'Integrated Studies' approach was one of the first commercially available models, published by Murdoch (1998). It uses seven main stages to describe student learning: Tuning In, Preparing to Find Out, Finding Out, Sorting Out, Going Further, Making Connections and Taking Action. The "5Es" is a more recent approach, more firmly located in Science curriculum, though it is becoming more widely applied (Hackling, Peers, & Prain, 2007). It has five phases of learning that incorporate student inquiries: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate. The TELSTAR model was developed by the Department of Education, Queensland (Department of Education - Queensland, 1994) and includes seven stages of investigation: Tune In, Explore, Look, Sort, Test, Act and Reflect. And, finally, the Action Research Model is the fourth main approach used in primary schools (Stringer, 2009). It involves eight stages that underpin student-centred research activities: Identify Problem, Investigate Problem, Evaluate Data, List Possible Actions, Predict Outcomes, Select Best Action, Implement Action and Evaluate Action.

All of the inquiry models described make claims about their capacities to enable the development of students' investigative and thinking skills, which in turn contributes to their ability to participate effectively in society. Furthermore, these approaches posit that students develop rich conceptual understandings of their world through the use of interdisciplinary approaches. It is often the tension of disciplinary against interdisciplinary approaches that can be seen to differentiate approaches to teaching and learning in the Humanities between primary and

secondary schools. It is important to note here that the rigour of the disciplinary knowledge that contributes to these interdisciplinary approaches should not be underestimated.

In all of the noted Inquiry approaches, four common principles are apparent. The first principle foregrounds the importance of encouraging students to think about the topic, concept or content knowledge. The second principle is that teachers provide a structure for student articulations of queries about the specific topic or concept, as well as the skills to undertake research that will resolve those queries with instructional support. The third principle is that it is valuable to have opportunities for students to share their work, and specifically the outcomes of their research, with a view to forming collaborations or connections to aspects of a concept together. The fourth principle is that knowledge should be acted upon, and that the work undertaken within these inquiries is valuable. These principles underpin how Inquiry approaches are developed within the primary teacher education curriculum described within this paper.

This version of Inquiry and where it fits into the course

The use of Inquiry approaches described within this context is situated in the second of two core primary undergraduate Humanities subjects, as well as a single postgraduate primary Humanities subject. Students demonstrate their capacity to structure disciplinary and interdisciplinary Humanities through the submission of sequences of linear learning prior to their enrolments in inquiry-based subjects. Drawing upon the teaching

	Integrated Inquiry Approach	5Es	TELSTAR	Action Research Model
Stages of Inquiry Model	Tuning In	Engage	Tune In	Identify problem
	Preparing to find out	Explore	Explore	Investigate problem
	Finding out	Explain	Look	Evaluate data
	Sorting out	Elaborate	Sort	List possible actions
	Going Further	Evaluate	Test	Predict outcomes
	Making Connections		Act	Select best action
	Taking Action		Reflect	Implement action
				Evaluate action

Figure 1 - Current Inquiry approaches in Australian schools

staff's professional experiences in schools and scholarly engagement with the evolving curriculum and pedagogy fields of research, the ways in which the students have been supported to develop their own inquiry stance has changed significantly over the past eight years.

In the first inclusions of inquiry pedagogies in the Humanities units, students were explicitly taught about the various stages of curriculum planning and learning activities. They were also provided with a template, expected to choose a relevant humanities topic and then to subsequently submit a planner that would frame a classroom's curriculum over a term. The students who excelled were those who had firmly grasped the disciplinary concepts and were able to do the complex mapping of conceptual development and identify ways in which this could be developed in a classroom. Typical nominated topics included Indigenous Perspectives, Global Perspectives, Australians at War and Multiculturalism. The units produced were broad, as students found it difficult to prioritise which were the most important aspects of learning against all of the content that could be incorporated.

As a further enhancement, audit pedagogies were introduced for students to track their planning to assure that what was written could be enacted in the spirit it was intended. For example, whilst students planned learning through Murdoch's template for Inquiry Learning (Murdoch, 1998), they audited using either Productive Pedagogies (Mills et al., 2009) or Learning by Design (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005). Given the increased complexities of both learning and applying different pedagogical models, the topics selected became simpler, yet retained their breadth. Topics included Indigenous Culture, Issues of Sustainability, Local History and Celebrations Across Cultures. Many of the students reflected a deeper understanding of the applications of pedagogical frameworks and paid more focused attention to the development of fewer concepts through the cross-walks of each model. In this version of the assessment, however, the Humanities disciplines were increasingly absent and students seemed keener to develop the historical concepts (e.g. through literacy approaches), thus not developing the required skills from a disciplinary stance.

The next iteration made stronger links between scholarly readings, curriculum policy and inquiry models as a curriculum and pedagogical framework. Students were asked to position and justify any inclusion of content within their inquiry unit on the basis of current research in Humanities Education. The student-nominated topics became far more sharply focused and strongly discipline-oriented. Topics included things such as "Local Communities between now and 1990", "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle", "Indigenous peoples on the Merri Creek" and "Understanding business". The inquiry units developed disciplinary depth, but often lacked the creativity in approaches to teaching and learning that had been evident in the previous broader studies. And even though an inquiry unit may have targeted a primary classroom of

Preps, the narrowness of the focus and literal reading of the curriculum policies and guidelines often resulted in planned learning that was not relevant or developmentally accessible to learners of that age group.

The most current approach has removed the freedom of student topic choice. Rather, a number of conceptualised inquiries have been developed and offered to students for further development. These inquiries are lifeworld-relevant in their orientation, and articulate the specific class level and disciplines that should inform and contribute to student learning. Students are expected to situate them in relevant academic literature and within current curriculum policies. Over the past two years, the interdisciplinary topics have included: Sports around the world (Geography/History), Events which have changed the world (History/Geography), Keeping the house running (Economics/Geography), Greening or Browning: Understanding environmental issues (Geography/Economics), History never repeats (History/Futures/Civics and Citizenship), Fun through time and place (History/Geography/Economics) and the Money of Music (Economics/Geography). Overall, the quality of disciplinary rigour approaches to curriculum development and resources located have been significantly improved. However, in making these claims, student feedback suggests that much time is still expended on understanding the complexities of Inquiry frameworks, and specifically the discrete "stages of learning".

Towards a new Humanities Model of Inquiry (HMI)

In the next iterations of the Humanities curriculum subjects, a new approach to Inquiry will be trialled that specifically enables a balance between disciplinary knowledge and skills and purposeful stages of learning through inquiry. This model proposes five stages, which include Immersion (in topic and discipline), Exploration (of topic and discipline), Focussed Investigation (of topic through discipline), Showcased Learning (through topic and discipline) and Applied Knowledge (to topic and discipline). It is posited within this framework that learning will be assessed at the point of intersection between topic and disciplinary knowledge.

The Humanities Model of Inquiry (HMI) draws upon a range of strategies for grouping students that enables both teacher-directed or scaffolded knowledge and skill development - with the explicit opportunities for independent and student-directed learning - within the scope of topic and disciplinary-bounded learning. Immersion and Exploration are directed whole-class learning experiences, whereas Focussed Investigation and Showcased Learning are dynamic and involve both independent and small group learning design. The Applied Knowledge stage will be undertaken by negotiation between teachers and students.

The requirements remain the same for students to situate learning within current research, as well as demonstrating relevance against curriculum policy and appropriateness of age and context. What this model offers, which is

not currently evident in previous iterations, is a more bounded and explicit articulation of the connections between lifeworld learning and the disciplinary skills and knowledge that enable students to engage in sustained inquiry. This model also offers a more succinct and focused way for curriculum design to draw upon a range of pedagogical strategies over varied durations.

This model is currently being tested across schools, and in two teacher education sites. In testing rigour and transferability, it is also being trialled in a broader higher education setting beyond teacher education, offering a broader approach to Humanities knowledge and skill development. This is an exciting development and an important agenda in a landscape of shifting curriculum agendas.

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