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**Inquiry Approaches in Secondary**

**Studies of Society and Environment**

**Key Learning Area**

### Occasional paper prepared for the

##### Queensland School Curriculum Council

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**1. Introduction**

‘Inquiry as a framework for developing understandings about the world has a long history in educational pedagogy and remains a powerful tool in the contemporary classroom’ (Murdoch 1998, p. 4). It is timely, with the development of the Queensland Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) syllabus, to reflect on what makes inquiry a powerful vehicle for learning.

The reader is invited to consider the role of inquiry within the broad context of the key learning area, as well as the understandings of learning and teaching that underpin inquiry processes. Consideration of the statements in Table 1 and identification with some of those listed below will support the reader to clarify understandings with regard to inquiry and broad curriculum underpinnings.

**Table 1 Exploring understandings of inquiry in the secondary school**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. The teacher can provide most of the content material for an inquiry at secondary level. 2. The SOSE key learning area has its own requirements for presenting information and formats or genres used in other key learning areas should not be used. 3. Inquiry projects will prepare students for life after school in which they will be able to understand key issues and monitor the roles of nominated persons who will guarantee that their interests are served. 4. Inquiries are seen as ways of supporting schools’ broad goals of maintaining, reproducing and legitimating social, economic and political structures. 5. Inquiry projects will involve students in collaborative partnerships with community and government groups so that their findings and recommendations can be heard. 6. Students should be grouped homogeneously, using streaming/selection for any inquiry work. 7. Inquiry processes should be aimed at individualisation of tasks, with some opportunities for group work. 8. Inquiry processes should involve heterogeneous groups that build on independence and interdependence. 9. The student-teacher relationship during the inquiry process is typified by the teacher yielding control, as students are able to exercise self-control within the existing social and cultural frameworks. 10. Teachers need to use processes of critical reflection in order to review their practices with regard to inquiry learning. 11. Inquiry learning is best reserved for gifted and talented students or those who satisfy mandatory requirements of a SOSE work program. 12. The teacher is regarded as a ‘mentor’ or facilitator as students conduct their inquiries. 13. The teacher is regarded as a co-learner as students conduct their inquiries. 14. The teacher has mastery of all content material, providing structuring and sequencing of all material for students. 15. Processes and topics of inquiry are negotiated and emphasis is placed on projects that involve action that will improve the broader community. |

The above statements were provided to support the reader to reflect on the broad curriculum orientations that underpin pedagogical approaches, in general, and inquiry approaches, specifically. Responses 5, 8, 10, 13 and 15 reflect practices and approaches that Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983 p. 49)[[1]](#endnote-1) would label as belonging to a ‘socially critical curriculum orientation’ whilst responses 3, 7, 9, 11 and 12 suggest a ‘liberal/progressive curriculum orientation’ and responses 1, 2, 4, 6 and 14 indicate commitment to a ‘vocational/neo-classical orientation’. The types of ‘inquiry’ that are called for in the Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Syllabusare aligned with a socially critical pedagogy.Such pedagogical underpinnings will be further explored later in this paper.

The purposes of this paper are four fold:

* To briefly explore the pedagogical underpinnings for the use of inquiry method as it is presented in the Studies of Society and Environment Syllabus*;*
* To outline a range of inquiry processes that could be used to support students to demonstrate the core learning outcomes and, importantly, define some essential characteristics of effective inquiry models;
* To provide specific examples of the ways in which these approaches could be used with regard to core learning outcomes; and
* To provide further references throughout the paper that teachers may find helpful in the development and implementation of effective inquiry processes within the SOSE key learning area.

**2. Pedagogical Underpinnings of Inquiry Processes in Studies of Society and Environment**

At the outset, it is important to state that the core learning outcomes are the overarching determinant of the nature of inquiry within the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area. The core learning outcomes of the Syllabus*,* that draw onsocially critical perspectives that, in turn, incorporate the values of social justice, democratic values, peace and ecological and economic sustainability, are the chief determinants of the nature of inquiry within this key learning area. Therefore, specific reference will be made to the core learning outcomes throughout this paper.

The Syllabuscalls for “student-centred approaches to learning and teaching [that] include socio-cultural, socially critical and metacognitive approaches”. The broad “socially critical” curriculum orientation that was introduced at the outset of this paper involves approaches that are “socio-cultural” and “metacognitive”. It is important to note, however, that the presence of socio-cultural and metacognitive approaches does not guarantee a socially critical curriculum. A worthwhile practical guide to the use of inquiry approaches in secondary schools must involve an exploration of the pedagogical underpinnings of such practices.

Table 2 draws on Hoepper and Land’s (1996, pp. 85 - 86) understanding of these curriculum orientations defined by Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983).

##### Table 2 Curriculum orientations and classrooms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Curriculum orientation** | **What the classroom looks like** |
| **Vocational neo-classical or ‘conservative’** (Hoepper and Land 1996, p. 85) | “Conservative classrooms are characterized by the undisputed authority of the teacher, the relative passivity of the students, and the unproblematic transmission of authorised knowledge.” |
| **Liberal** | “Liberal classrooms are characterised by the teacher’s role as leader and facilitator, active inquiry by students, and an emphasis on understanding the reasons for social phenomena.” |
| **Socially critical** | “Critical classrooms are characterized by more democratic relations between teachers and students, by high levels of collaboration, and by learning that involves ideological critique.” |

The question then emerges as to how to adopt approaches that will guarantee inquiry processes that are “socially critical, socio-cultural and metacognitive”**.** Both Hoepper and Land (1996) and McDonald (1996) suggest that an understanding of Habermas’s “knowledge-constitutive interests” supports students’ and teachers’ framing of appropriate inquiries for students. Simply put, these forms of knowledge are variously labelled because they serve the interests of particular groups. According to Habermas’s schema, the knowledge-constitutive interests are technical, practical and emancipatory.

Hence, technical questions for inquiry can be framed which involve exploration of how particular phenomena occur. For example, in research prior to demonstrating a core learning outcome from the strand, Systems, Resources and Power (SRP 6.5), students might ask the following technical question: *How are scarce resources allocated within the Australian and global contexts?* Practical questions involve asking why particular phenomena occur. Thus, a practical question addressing SRP 6.5 might be *Why is the Federal government involved in the allocation of scarce resources within Australia?* Socially critical inquiry will not result, however, if students do not ask critical or emancipatory questions. Emancipatory or critical questions are those which investigate whose interests are being served. For example, students could investigate the following questions: *Should traditional owners of the land be automatically guaranteed ownership of scarce resources? Whose interests are being served as a result of uranium mining?* The contention here is that the inclusion of technical, practical *and* critical questions will provide for learning that supports students to look critically at the way things are and consider how they could be changed to improve outcomes for all, especially those currently disadvantaged.

**2.1 A range of inquiry processes that could be used to support students to demonstrate the core learning outcomes**

There is a multitude of inquiry processes from which teachers can choose in order to support students’ demonstration of the core learning outcomes of syllabus documents within the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area. For the purposes of this paper, a range of inquiry processes has been presented in Table 3 that uses the “general sequence of phases” suggested in the Syllabus*.* This sequence includes: framing and focusing questions, locating, organising and analysing evidence, evaluating, synthesising and reporting conclusions and possibly taking action of some sort.

It is important to note that the inquiry processes explored in this paper are those which involve students working fairly independently. Of course, a whole class group can be involved in a collective inquiry. For example, reference is made later in this paper to a Level 5 module in which the whole class is engaged in activities structured using the Social Investigation Strategy (Department of Education, Queensland 1992, pp. 16 - 17), followed by individual or group inquiries. A premise of this paper, therefore, is that student-directed inquiry, on a group or individual level, is most desirable.

Additionally, the diversity and specialisation that contributes to the richness of the SOSE key learning area is reflected through the inclusion of geographical and historical inquiry processes. That other inquiry processes are relevant and appropriate to the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area is articulated in the introduction of the Syllabusthat states:

A range of interrelated **concepts** associated with particular **key values** and **processes** underpins the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area. These are drawn from disciplines including history, geography, economics, politics, sociology, anthropology, law, psychology and ethics; and studies, such as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Asian, Australian, civics and citizenship, enterprise, environmental, futures, gender, global, media, rural, peace, and others (p 1).

A particular challenge for the Studies of Society and Environment key learning area is to maintain the integrity of disciplines, such as History and Geography that have played such a significant role in the academic lives of secondary students, whilst at the same time supported students to appreciate and work with the integration of key concepts from related fields.[[2]](#endnote-2)

It is not suggested that teachers of Studies of Society and Environment in secondary schools would use all of these methods, or that they be proficient in many more than about two of these. The range is offered here in order to highlight commonalities and differences and to provide a context for discussion in schools that require a stimulus to beginning teacher and faculty investigation of inquiry methodologies for students.

Table 3 A range of inquiry processes for secondary students (See endnote for sources of models)[[3]](#endnote-3)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SOSE Syllabus sequence of phases** | **Social Investigation Strategy** | **TELSTAR** | **Historical process** | **Geographical process** | **Action Research Model** | **A model of inquiry learning** |
| **Framing and focusing questions** | 1. Motivate 2. Explore 3. Frame, negotiate and identify | 1. Tune in 2. Explore knowledge, viewpoints, questions and methods | 1. Motivation 2. Preparation to consider a problem 3. Diagnosis 4. Formulation of an hypothesis or a set of questions | 1. Awareness of a question, issue or problem arising from interaction of people with their environment 2. Outline and define the question, issue or problem 3. State hypothesis if appropriate 4. Decide on data and evidence to be collected | 1. Identify problem | 1. Tuning in (identifying & defining issue) 2. Deciding directions (formulation of hypothesis) |
| **Locating, organising and analysing evidence** | 1. Gather information 2. Analyse information | 1. Look 2. Sort | 1. Research Stage One 2. Social reinforcement and clarification 3. Consolidation | 1. Collect, describe organise and analyse data and evidence | 1. Investigate problem 2. Evaluate data | 1. Sorting out (data collection, processing & analysis, refining issues) |
| **Evaluating, synthesising and reporting conclusions** | 1. Conclude and review | 1. Test | 1. Research Stage 2 and synthesis 2. Evaluation and/or assessment | 1. Move towards providing explanations 2. Attempt to accept or reject hypothesis 3. Decide whether more data are required 4. Evaluate results 5. Attempt to make predictions 6. Move towards generalisations 7. Consider future alternatives | 1. List possible actions 2. Predict outcomes 3. Select best action | 1. Drawing conclusions |
| **Possibly taking action of some sort** | 1. Take action | 1. Act |  | 1. Make decision | 1. Implement action | 1. Considering social action |
| **Reconsidering consequences and outcomes from each phase** | 1. Reflect on | 1. Reflect |  |  | 1. Evaluate action |  |

**3. Some Essential Characteristics of Inquiry Processes**

All of these inquiry models involve commitment of the learner to continuous reflection and re-evaluation of the direction and purposes of the inquiry. Readers are urged strongly to seek out the original source documents of those models with which they are unfamiliar. What follows is a discussion of some essential characteristics of effective inquiry processes. Some of these characteristics are explicitly advocated in the models, whilst for others it is important for teachers to apply these qualities very overtly.

# 3.1 Recursive nature of inquiry

A problematic aspect of the presentation of these models in this comparative format is the suggestion of linearity. One of the essential qualities of inquiry processes that support students to demonstrate core learning outcomes at Levels 5 and 6 is the recursive nature of inquiry. Productive inquiry cannot be conducted in a strictly linear fashion with the questions that guide the inquiry remaining the same throughout. Students and teachers need to adopt flexible approaches so that in the light of information gathered, knowledge being constructed, and skills and processes being enhanced, additional or different questions and/or hypotheses can be adopted. The recursive nature of an inquiry means that, during an inquiry, the unexpected may be encountered so students may revisit and reconsider their work in earlier phases. It could be argued that inquiry models, such as the Social Investigation Strategy (Department of Education, Queensland, 1992, pp. 16 - 17) and its simplified version, TELSTAR (Education Department, Queensland 1992, p. 19) along with the Action Research Model (Department of Education, Queensland 1993) provide more scaffolding for student reflection and recursiveness than do other models presented here.

# 3.2 Students’ agency in the inquiry process: active construction of meaning

That students would revisit questions and hypotheses during an inquiry is the result of a key characteristic of sound inquiry process, that is, the active construction of meaning. Sound definitions of learning, with their emphases on students’ construction of meaning, further suggest practical ways in which inquiry processes could be planned and implemented in secondary schools. As much as possible the planning for, and carrying out, of the inquiry should be conducted by students themselves. Boomer (quoted in Wilson and Wing Jan 1993, p. 55) could have been referring specifically to learning through inquiry when he claims that “the curriculum is no longer a prepackaged course to be taken; it is a jointly enacted composition that grows and changes as it proceeds”. An important question then emerges: in practical terms exactly how much scope can students be given to construct meaning for themselves during inquiries.

An integral aspect of students’ construction of meaning is metacognition, another approach to inquiry highlighted in the Syllabus. Metacognition, or learning about one’s own learning processes, is explained more fully as including “predicting, checking, monitoring, ‘reality testing’ and the coordinating and control of deliberate attempts to learn, study and solve problems” (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria 1989, p. 13). At all stages of an inquiry there are opportunities for students to be metacognitive:

* at the outset of the inquiry and as it proceeds in order to critique one’s own hypothesis or problem formulation;
* to analyse the nature of questions developed and reformulate where necessary;
* to stop during the gathering of data to think about what is being learnt and how;
* importantly, at the conclusion of an inquiry students need specific support (until they do this automatically) to reflect on the methods of learning that were effective for them, as well as those methods that proved ineffective.

Additionally, it is important that learners reflect on the stages and nature of the inquiry framework, itself. If the teacher always orchestrates these stages, this skill will not be developed well. A component of the Syllabus that supports students’ metacognition is the explicit naming of processes used in SOSE investigation. Processes explicitly named are: investigating, creating, participating, communicating and reflecting. These processes may represent the phases of an inquiry, or one or more processes may occur within a phase of inquiry (see the Level 5 module, *Environments & Markets: Local to Global* that uses these processes in order to sequence the five phases of the inquiry. See also the inquiry in Table 5 that draws on the Social Investigation Strategy, but which highlights these processes.) Also crucial to students’ construction of meaning is acknowledgment of, and engagement with, students’ prior knowledge, experiences and attitudes.Metacognition is also closely connected to adopting a recursive approach to inquiry. The learner not only revisits phases and reformulates questions or hypotheses on the basis of information gathered, but also on the basis of knowledge about the way in which learning is occurring or not occurring.

**3.3 Students’ agency in the inquiry process:** **negotiation**

A useful answer may begin with what must remain within the realm of the teacher’s direct influence. It is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that learning experiences, and in this case planned inquiries, support students to demonstrate the core learning outcomes of the syllabus. Of course, if the situation arises that all core learning outcomes have been demonstrated and opportunity exists for an independent study, it is reasonable and desirable to expect that students would exert discretion over the outcomes to be addressed. Many opportunities exist, however, for students to direct their own inquiries.

Wilson and Wing Jan (1993, p. 59) suggest that students can negotiate the area of interest, methods of investigation, time required for the investigation (this may prove challenging in many secondary school contexts) and materials and resources to be used. In this approach teachers and students are engaged in “shared investigations” (Hamston and Murdoch 1996, p. 6).

# 3.4 Students’ agency in the inquiry process: framing of questions

Framing of questions is also an area in which students can exert agency over their work. An important practical consideration in teachers’ support of students’ framing of questions is the provision of appropriate frameworks. Already modelled in this paper is the framing of questions using Habermas’s constitutive knowledge interests: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory or critical (quoted in Hoepper and Land 1996, p. 86). Another framework that could be shared with students in order to increase their input into their own investigations is the notion of strategic questioning (Level 2 module: *Green, lean, cleaning machine: caring for the environment*). The questions below are examples of practical and technical questions. Hence, this schema can be used to complement those drawing on Habermas’s knowledge-constitutive interests. It cannot be overemphasised that student awareness of types of questions is vital for effective inquiries to occur. This questioning schema, illustrated in Table 4 by drawing on a Level 6 core learning outcome, supports students to move from simple levels to more complex levels of questioning.

**Table 4 Using Strategic Questioning**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of  strategic  questioning | Knowledge  being  constructed  about. . . | **Core Learning Outcome Place and space**  **PS 6.2** Students create proposals to resolve environmental issues in the Asia-Pacific region.  Students *may* choose local and Asian land clearing issues to demonstrate the above core learning outcome. |
| 1. Focus questions | 1. the key facts to an understanding of the situation | 1. Where, how and why is land being cleared? 2. Who is involved in the process? 3. What are the rates of land clearing in the area being studied? 4. For what purposes is land cleared? |
| 2. Observation questions | 1. what can be observed about a situation | 1. What evidence can you see of land clearing in this area? 2. What do you know about land clearing in other areas? 3. What do you know about the impact of land clearing on the environment? 4. What do you know about the state of the land prior to clearing? 5. What do you know about the state of the land after the clearing? |
| 3. Feeling questions | 1. people’s feelings with regard to the situation | 1. Who do you think has strong feelings about the clearing of land? 2. What do you think the views of each of these groups would be? 3. What are your feelings toward the clearing of land? |
| 4. Visioning questions | 1. people’s ideals, values and hopes for the future | 1. What do we need to do to achieve a balance that will satisfy all groups who have strong views regarding land clearing? 2. Whose responsibility is it to bring about such a balance? |
| 5.Personal inventory questions | 1. your own attitudes to the issue | 1. What is your view regarding land clearing? |
| 6. Change questions | 1. what needs to be done to build a better future | 1. What do you need to do to clarify this situation and bring about a better situation? |

3.5 Students’ agency in the inquiry process: learning in social context

Learning from others is an important ingredient in the conditions that support students to actively construct meaning for themselves. Phillips and Soltis (1991) sum up the importance of the social context in learning processes when they claim:

Learners have parents, siblings, teachers, peers, and fellow learners, with all of whom they communicate and interact, and from whom they receive guidance and stimulation. Learners interact with adults who are generally more proficient than they are, they discuss their puzzlements with their friends (using the social medium of language), and they read books and magazines and watch television. (p. 51)

An important implication of the acknowledgment of the importance of the social in learning is the need to plan inquiries that draw on these contexts. A core learning outcome from the strand, Time, Continuity and Change: “TCC 5.3 Students collaborate to locate and systematically record information about people in diverse past settings” offers an example of the way in which inquiry processes can be planned to draw on social contexts. Apart from the cooperative learning contexts, referred to already, demonstration of outcomes, such as the one above, is well served by social research which involves students engaging with the viewpoints of others beyond the classroom to gather data.

# 3.6 Student agency in the inquiry process: taking action

Another important quality of the inquiry process is the carrying out of some form of action. Some of the models presented here state this phase more explicitly than do others. If action is used in a broad sense, all inquiry models result in action. Certainly models of inquiry that focus on environmental issues highlight this phase. However, it is important to note that the demonstration of a genre, for example, the writing of a report or a persuasive argument constitutes action. The demonstration of knowledge constructed during an inquiry also constitutes action. The diverse ways in which action occurs as a result of inquiry is outlined by Calder and Smith (1991, pp. 62 - 63).

* Calder and Smith propose four main types of action:
* action to inform others (display, newspaper articles, letters, etc.);
* action to stimulate others to join (educating others through guest speakers, films, etc.);
* action to direct change (debating issues publicly, visiting politicians, making submissions, etc.); and
* action to operate change (joining and/or raising money for local or national projects, etc.).

4. Essential Characteristics of Inquiry Processes

When organised into a sequence of activities for students, Studies of Society and Environment inquiry processes include most of the following characteristics:

* They address a number of identified core learning outcomes, usually from different strands.
* The framework to be used for the inquiry is explicit. For example, a module is structured using the phases of the Social Investigation Strategy, and/or the key processes of the Studies of Society and Environment syllabus, that is, investigating, communicating, participating, reflecting and creating.
* A socially critical approach is used. Questions such as *Who benefits from promoting this image?* advance a socially critical perspective. The inclusion of more critical or emancipatory questions would also achieve this. Questions students could be asked to consider include: *Whose voice is heard in this text? What are you invited to understand? Whose views are marginalised or silenced? What are your views? Whose interests are being served here?*
* A socio-cultural approach is used. That is, the inquiry draws strongly on the context-text model of language use in which an analysis of texts should begin with a description of the contextual factors — that is, the subject matter, the people involved, and the mode and medium through which the ideas are conveyed — and then uses functional grammar concepts to describe the text that arises within the particular context.
* Students have agency in the inquiry process. They are actively involved in the construction of meaning, including the framing of key questions for investigation.
* Students’ agency in the inquiry process includes negotiation. To facilitate student construction of meaning, students negotiate topics and processes throughout the collective inquiry, as well as during their own inquiries. Extensive scope should exist for negotiation in the development of the type of presentation to occur.
* Students’ agency in the inquiry process acknowledges social contexts.
* The nature of most Studies of Society and Environment topics requires that students learn from one another and recognise the need for some social relevance in what they investigate.

Students’ agency in the inquiry process involves taking action. This action may take a number of forms, including the completion of authentic assessment tasks.

5. Essential Characteristics of Inquiry Processes – A Proposed Example

The following example in Table 5 suggests some ideas that teachers and students could use when constructing an inquiry that supports students to demonstrate Level 5 Core Learning Outcomes: Time, Continuity and Change 5.1 and 5.5:

* Students use primary and secondary sources to identify the developments of ideas from ancient to modern times; and
* Students identify values inherent in historical sources to reveal who benefits or is disadvantaged by particular heritages.

It should be emphasised that this table offers *one* pathway which might occur when students and teacher interact to develop learning and teaching activities that support students to demonstrate the above outcomes. An authentic inquiry embedded in a socially critical curriculum is one that evolves through the dynamic interaction between learners and which results in action that improves the social context in which we live. Specifically, to serve the purposes of the Syllabus such an inquiry values and promotes social justice, democratic processes, ecological and economic sustainability and peace.

Table 5 Australian History – whose history is it, anyway? (Note that SOSE processes are highlighted in the left-hand column in upper case)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Phase of the Social Investigation Strategy | Possible scope and sequence[[4]](#endnote-4) | Essential character-istics of effective inquiry |
| Motivate  INVESTIGATE | 1. Invite students to peruse texts such as “100 Famous Australians”, lists of parliamentarians, a brief written overview of Australian history published thirty years ago or a documentary of similar vintage and to consider questions such as:  * Which social groups are represented in these texts? * Which social groups are not represented in these texts? * What activities, ideas, etc appear to be valued in these texts? * Students might like to select texts, which are related directly or indirectly to the values of social justice, democratic processes, ecological and economic sustainability and peace. | Arousing student interest  Focus on values |
| Explore  INVESTIGATE | 1. Learners explore Core Learning Outcomes in TCC 5.1 & 5.5 and rewrite in their own words. 2. Specifically, learners could explore their knowledge and attitudes regarding:  * the nature of reflective inquiry * the notion of a social group as being people who share similar identities in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, place of dwelling, physical ability and so on * the notion of values as: * determined by the beliefs we hold. They are ideas about what someone or a group thinks is important in life and they play a very important part in our decision-making. We express our values in the way we think and act (Lemin, Potts & Welsford, 1994, p. 1). * what constitutes historical sources * the concept of a marginalised group.  1. Learners could read as many texts as possible that are related to the period of history that interests them. They could look for film and literary representations of this period of history, focusing on texts that suggest particular positions relating to values of social justice, democratic processes, ecological and economic sustainability and peace. | Arousing student interest  Active construction of meaning  Addressing core learning outcomes from syllabus |
| Frame, negotiate  and identify  COMMUNICATE  INVESTIGATE  CREATE  REFLECT | 1. Working either individually or in groups, learners could:  * negotiate to explore a particular period of history; * identify a particular problem, using the lens of the values mentioned above; and * frame specific questions about this period, focusing on the broad questions:   + *Which groups were the actors creating history at this time? What values did they hold?*   + *Which groups were acted upon? In other words, which groups appeared to not have a role in determining economic and political processes? What values did they hold?*   + *What changes occurred during this time? Which groups appeared to benefit from these changes?* | Negotiation of  topic  Framing of questions  Socially critical perspectives  (critical literacy)  Learning in a social context |
| Gather information  COMMUNICATE  INVESTIGATE  CREATE  REFLECT | 1. Students could gather a range of texts, including primary source documents, such as songs, posters, film, letters, newspaper articles, etc which fall into two main categories:  * those texts which represent mainstream or dominant activities and values; and * those texts which represent a non-mainstream or marginalised view. | Socially critical perspectives  (critical literacy)  Reframe questions, problem and processes for learning |
| Analyse  COMMUNICATE  INVESTIGATE  CREATE  REFLECT | 1. Students could write a commentary on each text that presents an understanding of values held during this historical period. Remember the values will seldom be stated explicitly, but every text is underpinned by particular values. About 5 or 6 texts would provide a useful range using the following guiding questions:   *Technical questions:*   * What are you invited to understand from this text about what was happening during this period of history? * Which groups were making key economic, social and political decisions? Which groups were not involved in making key economic, social and political decisions? * What are you invited to understand about what beliefs were valued by the mainstream? For example, what were the dominant values with regard to family life, working responsibilities, general lifestyle, relations with foreign countries, attitudes to teenagers, viewpoints on war, etc? What are you invited to understand with regard to values that were marginalised or silenced?   *Practical questions:*   * Why were these social groups making key decisions regarding economic, political and social processes? * Why were some social groups not involved in such decision-making?   *Critical questions:*   * Whose interests are served by the values represented in this text? * Whose interests are not being served by the values represented in this text? | Active construction of meaning  Reframing of questions, problem and processes for learning |
| Conclude and review  REFLECT  COMMUNICATE  PARTICIPATE | 1. Learners working in groups could discuss and formulate group conclusions about values that were dominant in this period and values that were marginalised. | Learning in a social context |
| Take action  CREATE  COMMUNICATE  PARTICIPATE | * Students could be invited to choose a genre that fulfils the following requirements: * An oral presentation; * The sharing of knowledge to an audience of peers; * Adoption of a life-like role | Taking action  Negotiation of learning process |
| Reflect  REFLECT | 1. Students could be invited to use graphic organisers such as PMI (Plus, Minus and Interesting Factors) or SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Tensions) to reflect on what they have learnt and the effectiveness of the learning processes that they have used to learn. | Being meta-cognitive |

**6. A Mindset for Inquiry**

Hargreaves’s (1997; 99) advice that teachers need to learn to teach in ways they did not learn themselves is useful here. Successful inquiry fulfils the characteristics outlined in this paper, with student agency in learning, relevance of issues to students’ lives and the scaffolding of some form of action being vital components. It is highly recommended that teams of teachers of Studies of Society and Environment consider these approaches in order to investigate which forms are most appropriate for their contexts. (See Cox 1989 and Heck and Reddy 1998 for specific strategies to encourage student inquiry as well as advice on conditions that inhibit such activity.) This activity could be conducted as a faculty project that provides a context for teacher reflection of their own practice. (See Heck and Reddy 1998 for specific ways in which teachers can develop Studies of Society and Environment or whole school approaches to developing appropriate inquiry methods.) This investigation which could be conducted as an action research project could also involve teachers identifying the skills they require and planning to acquire these skills through the use of learning logs, professional development sessions and so on.

Educational literature abounds with definitions of learning that will equip students for socially just futures in which lifelong learning and productive response to change are fundamental components. Senge (quoted in O’Neill 1995 p. 20) illuminates the nature of effective inquiry when talking about learning, in general. He claims that “[r]eally deep learning is the process that inevitably is driven by the learner, not by someone else. And it always involves moving back and forth between a domain of thinking and a domain of action”. The challenges to create such student agency in our classrooms are great, but the rewards are enormous.

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**8. Notes**

1. This article is highly recommended reading for teachers and administrators. Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983) briefly outline “three orientations to curriculum” and then offer the reader a detailed explanation of how these orientations translate into classroom practice and organisation. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For example, as a member of a team or faculty, teachers could articulate those inquiry skills specific to particular disciplines. Considering geographical skills, for example, the chapter by Cox, “Making Inquiry Learning Work in the Geography Classroom” in Fien (1989) is highly relevant to the teaching of geographical skills within a SOSE or Geography syllabus. Readers are also urged to read the occasional papers commissioned by the QSCC in which historical and geographical processes, concepts and skills are explored. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. **Sequence of phases**: QSCC (1998b). *Studies of Society and Environment Years 1 to 10 Syllabus*. Brisbane: QSCC, pp. 8-9.

   **Social Investigation Strategy:** Education Department, Queensland. 1992, *Social Education Years 8-10 Syllabus,* Brisbane pp. 16-17.

   **TESLSTAR:** Education Department, Queensland. 1992*, Social Education Years 8-10 Syllabus,* Brisbane,

   p. 19. (See Education Department, Queensland, 1994 for video and support materials that explore TELSTAR.)

   **Historical process**: Board of Secondary School Studies (1988b*), Junior Syllabus in History*, Brisbane: BSSS,

   p. 11.

   **Geographical process**: Board of Secondary School Studies. 1988a, *Junior Syllabus in Geography.* Brisbane,

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   **Action Research Model**: Department of Education, Queensland. 1993, *P-12 Environmental Education Curriculum Guide.* Brisbane, p. 24.

   **A model of learning**: Gough, N. 1992, *Blueprints for Greening Schools*, Gould League, Melbourne. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See a curriculum overview, “I’m an Australian too” from Nayler (1997) for other useful ideas and headings for interrogating texts relevant to the scope and sequence outlined here.

   For interactive and cooperative learning strategies that can be interwoven into such a scope and sequence see Pike and Selby (1988), Education Department, Queensland (1993), Bellanca and Fogarty, (1991) and Gibbs (1995). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)