Chapter 9

Two-Way Enquiry Learning

It is now appropriate as a national priority to take the debate and practice of Indigenous education in Australia to a new level by bringing together the principles of two-way learning with the principles of participatory enquiry learning. Two-way enquiry learning is applicable for all students as a framework within which long-term investigations of reality can be conducted for an improved social life. It continues the progressive tradition of the modern era for enlightenment, truth and justice, where citizens do their own informed thinking and take autonomous action without the oppression of external imposition. We now turn our attention to how this might be achieved at the primary and secondary levels of schooling,

Table 1 below summarises the conditions for two-way learning as encountered in Chapter 7:

1. Respect for the knowledge and culture that all children bring to school and an acceptance that learning occurs actively from this platform in an outwards - inwards cyclical manner.

2. Recognition that the expression of learning occurs in different ways for different children based on their cultural and socio-economic background, but that a set of similar factors may exist in all cultures that emphasise construction of new knowledge rather than instruction in old content.

3. Integrated theory and practice incorporating respect for and learning from the natural environment.

4. Teaching and learning for all children that includes:
- holistic, integrated and constructed knowledge
- independence of thought and action
- emphasis on knowing by doing and experimental work
- opportunities for thinking about previous and new action
- observing and interacting with others in real life situations
- combining informal and formal situations and events
- strategies of trial and error, reproduction and critique
- applying context specific and general ideas
- utilising respected local and expert advice as required
- being challenged by local and global events.

5. Validation of childrens' learning and knowledge that is based upon consensual communication and democratic dialogue over time between participants and agreement on what is generally considered as being acceptable and true.

6. Holistic views of life and learning where knowledge arises from and returns to social and cultural environments for the betterment of communities of interest and where formal systems of education must be connected with the major trends and debates within communities to ground their purpose and meaning.

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Table 2 below summarises the suggested conditions for participatory enquiry learning as outlined in Chapter 8:
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1. Continuity of experience as the basis of all learning programs.

2. Long-term systematic processes of reflection on experience.

3. Teaching and learning that enables a framework of:
- working with integrated knowledge
- collaborative interaction with peers and teachers
- negotiated decisions on directions and processes
- multiple pathways for entry and enquiry
- unknown results by teachers and students
- construction and critique of ideas and proposals and
- encouragement of personal and group interests.

4. Democratic, long-term and communicative means of evaluating experience and propositions in relation to the knowledge of others.
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The indicators of each table are very similar and can therefore be consolidated into seven broad dimensions for Two-Way Enquiry Learning as below:

Table 3. Dimensions of Two-Way Enquiry learning
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Dimension 1

Continuity of experience as the basis of all learning programs.

Dimension 2

Recognition that the expression of learning occurs in different ways for different children based on their cultural and socio-economic background, but that a set of similar factors may exist in all cultures that emphasise construction of new knowledge rather than instruction in old content. This demands a respect for the knowledge and culture that all children bring to school and an acceptance that learning occurs actively from this platform in an outwards - inwards cyclical manner.

Dimension 3

Long-term systematic processes of reflection on experience.

Dimension 4

Integrated theory and practice incorporating respect for and learning from the natural environment.

Dimension 5

Teaching and learning that enables a framework of:
- holistic, integrated and constructed knowledge
- emphasis on knowing by doing and experimental work
- collaborative interaction with peers and teachers in real life situations
- combining informal and formal situations and events
- negotiated decisions on directions and processes
- strategies of trial and error, reproduction and critique

- multiple pathways for entry and enquiry
- unknown results by teachers and students
- opportunities for thinking about previous and new action
- construction and critique of ideas and proposals
- applying context specific and general ideas
- utilising respected local and expert advice as required
- encouragement of personal and group interests and
- being challenged by local and global events.

Dimension 6

Validation of childrens' learning, knowledge, experience and propositions that is based upon long-term consensual communication and democratic dialogue between participants and agreement on what is generally considered as being acceptable and true.

Dimension 7

Holistic views of life and learning where knowledge arises from and returns to social and cultural environments for the betterment of communities of interest and where formal systems of education must be connected with the major trends and debates within communities to ground their purpose and meaning.

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These dimensions of two-way enquiry learning are advanced as a means of reconciling Indigenous and western knowing within the confines and rigidities of formal non-Indigenous education systems. They are respectful of both paradigms of learning and attempt to embody the areas of overlap. There is no suggestion that one cultural style of learning is superior to another, although the dimensions are strongly based on a philosophical view that learning in all societies begins with community social practice and that new knowledge requires a systematic process of reflection on significant experience. Learning environmentally has a central position. Practice is

dignified as an essential component of learning, but theory and practice are considered as a unity at all times, with the theory that guides practice and the practice that informs theory being subject to continuous investigation. For these reasons it is necessary to temper a vulgar impericism, a reliance on observation or facts only, with an integrated and challenging critique and social discourse, often necessitating the assistance of valued friends and colleagues. Two processes therefore occur in tandem, where groups of people act and comment on their daily lives, at the same time as they bring to bear broader and external perspectives.

A specific location where two-way enquiry learning is in its initial stages of implementation at the tertiary level, is Nyerna Studies. This program does not claim to be working entirely in this manner, although the principles outlined in Chapter 1 are strikingly similar to the dimensions noted above. In describing issues that have arisen over the past three years as a result of a framework of two-way enquiry learning, Table 4 below shows the major cultural and political components identified as having implications for teaching and learning and for the narrative of understanding that is being lived and constructed. The left hand column depicts the eight fields that need to be engaged and researched at least as working arrangements so that Indigenous and

non-Indigenous participants can conduct their learning in a comprehensive and holistic manner. The middle column shows some of the major questions that emerge as a result of the field description and which require long-term research. The right hand column outlines some of the implications for teaching that occur and consequently, the sources of research data. To take row I as an example, the generation of critique, dialogue and possibility of change and improvment means a consideration of how different perspectives and world views can be respectfully analysed for similarities and dissimilarities and how these might provide different structural arrangements and modes of teaching.

Table 4: Elaborated definition of two-way enquiry learning

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Field	Research Questions	Data

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1. Critique, dialogue, possibility Modes of teaching	Bringing different perspectives, world views together	
2. Flexi-mode learning from	Providing different sites of experience, knowledge	Learning experience
3. Learning from the land Environment as	Exploring cognitive connections	knowledge site

4. Socio-cultural Utilisation of arts,	Enjoyment versus explanation and consciousness	technology
5. Socio-economic work and organisations	Economy as the basis of culture and of learning	Cultural, other
6. Community	Community knowledge as the basis of understanding	Community participation
7. Reconciliation Experiment, data, wisdom	Overlap of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowing	story, lore, of elders
8. Research Participatory research	Generation of new knowledge through explicit approaches to theorising	action

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Two-way enquiry learning as described here, is a reaffirmation of the place of Indigenous learning in the human concept of learning generally, that is a place of equality in relation to non-Indigenous learning and a positioning of it in the grand tradition and narrative of participatory enquiry. This allows a theorising of models or paradigms of learning that identifies an essence which can then form the basis of curriculum design in schools and universities. In noting the practical difficulties of each, the features of two-way enquiry learning that distinguish it from current practice include the following:

* Continuity is taken to mean a connection between experience over long periods of time, at least throughout the seven years of primary schooling and the six years of secondary schooling. the establishment of a small number of broadly descriptive learning outcomes for these periods of time will be a necessity.

* Cultural inclusiveness requires that all institutions engage in an ongoing conversation about cultural constructs and how learning can be frameworked accordingly. This creates a tension with centrally produced curriculum documents of political rather than epistemological and democratic intent that attempt to specifiy worthwhile content for age groups of students.

* Reflection is a high order intellectual process that presupposes an extensive reservoir of experience; leaners must have the opportunities to reflect in and reflect on practice, rather than be expected to reflect in a vacuum, or to raise a bucket of water from mid-air. The nature of experience and of systematic reflection across the curriculum of all learning programs is a marked departure from the competitive academic curriculum.

* Learning from the land is a clear demonstration of respect for Indigenous culture and epistemology, but is one that will benefit all children, as humans attempt to re-establish such harmonious connections in the modern world, whether urban, rural, or remote. Learning environmentally unites practice and theory, Indigenous and western knowing, but the actual bonds of unity are difficult to discern and explain.

* Holistic, integrated learning with all its necessary detail has been attempted by many educators, but the ideological constraints of schools have made its full expression somewhat muted. The combining of subjects and in some cases, year levels, provide some experience, but the structuring of learning around outcomes for example with a de-emphasising of subjects, will be a major challenge.

* Validating childrens' learning over long time frames as distinct from assessing predetermined content slices at a particular predetermined time, constitutes a significant change. It attacks ideological parameters and power structures. There is little reason however as to why children of all ages cannot engage in communicative action regarding the determnation of learning, knowledge and truth.

* Social connections with the school curriculum are necessary to provide points of reference, to ensure community relevance and to encourage full participation of community members, all of which assists the two-way exchange of knowledge and wisdom. Designing a curriculum in isolation from the great social trends of the day, weakens its epistemological heart and denies students access to the application of traditions and practices of communities as they go about constructing their lives.

In foregrounding a strong theoretical base that makes explicit the key dimensions of different paradigms, two-way enquiry learning will hopefully assist all Australian children, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to succeed in schools to a greater extent than is currently the case.

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