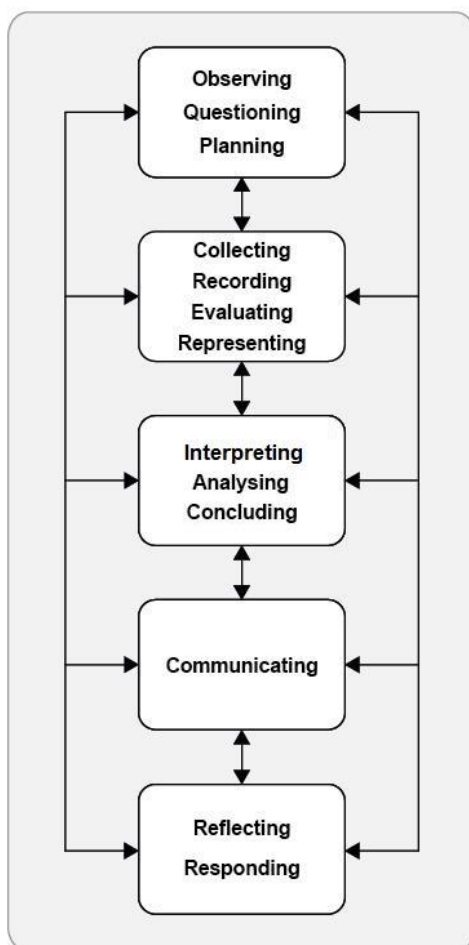


Support units: Professional practice
Overview

Geographical Inquiry

A flexible approach



This diagram indicates that the inquiry process should be applied flexibly. Not every investigation needs to follow every step, the process may follow loops in which students go back to an earlier stage to ask more questions or to undertake more analysis, some steps may be missed, and the time dedicated to each stage of inquiry need not be the same.

Source: Adapted from Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Australian Curriculum: Geography. Retrieved May2013, from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale>

Teaching inquiry step-by-step

In the observation, questioning and planning stages of inquiry learning, disciplinary skills and reasoning need to be modelled. The geographical questions that the students develop about something that has been observed, experienced or thought about, need to reflect attention to deep thinking by addressing geography's big ideas and through connections to important contemporary issues.

There is a need to demonstrate how geographers examine a wide range of data. Adequate time should be allocated for students to collect, record, evaluate and represent data from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Students need to be shown how to evaluate data for reliability and bias.

When students are making sense of the information gathered through textual analysis and interpretation, or by portraying it in maps, tables, graphs and diagrams, there are opportunities for deepening geographic knowledge and understanding and assessing for learning.

In the communication stage there are further opportunities for the demonstration of deep learning and for 'bridging', where the teacher encourages students to see connections between one learning episode and other contexts. Debriefing is an important means to determine whether deep learning has taken place and an opportunity to see how whether students are emerging as geographers rather than people who know something about geography.

The final stage allows the students to reflect on their learning processes or 'go meta' by reflecting on what the students now understand and how they have arrived at such an understanding. Students need some instruction about the processes of metacognition.

A number of questions should be borne in mind

Questions that should be kept in mind to support inquiry learning include:

- Which stages of the inquiry process offer opportunities for social interaction?

Which stages offer opportunities for developing the seven **General capabilities**

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/General-capabilities>:

- of literacy, numeracy, competence in information and communication technology (ICT) capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical behaviour and intercultural understanding?
- Are the needs of diverse learners accommodated in each stage of the inquiry process?
- What are the links with other learning areas?