

*"The Road not Taken":
A Journey into the
Jurisprudential Inquiry Model*

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Purpose of the Paper

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model in teaching and learning

Contemporary Issues in Teaching and Learning (EDCI 831)

- EDCI 831 is a graduate course that is offered to help students who are practicing teachers understand and articulate contemporary, controversial issues in teaching and learning.
- Offered in Spring 2008.
- Participants: 8 Graduate students in Curriculum & Instruction.

Course Objectives

- To understand and articulate contemporary educational issues;
- To document epiphanies of learning, “a-ha” moments through the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model; and
- To develop *praxis* informed by *phronesis* and work toward becoming better educators.

Course Topics

- **Financing Schools**
- **Standards-Based Reform**
- **Corporations, Commerce, and Schools**
- **The Academic Achievement Gap**
- **Standardized Testing: Restrict or Expand**
- **Discipline and Justice: Zero Tolerance or Discretion**
- **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001**
- **Embracing homosexuality in classroom**
- **Religion in classroom**
- **Technology in classroom**

Teaching Model:

Jurisprudential Inquiry Model

- Oliver, D., and Shaver, J. P. (1966/1974) created the jurisprudential inquiry model to help students learn to think systematically about contemporary issues.
- This model is to help students relearn/unlearn their positions on important legal, ethical, social, educational issues through intellectual debates.

(Source: Oliver, D., & Shaver, J. P. (1966/1974). *Teaching public issues in the high school*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin)

Jurisprudential Inquiry Model:

How It Works

- **Debate Team Discussion Time (15 min.)**
- **Introduction of a Topic by Debate Leader (10 min.)**
- **Debate (60 min.)**
- **Debriefing Time (30 min.)**
- **Questions (20 min.)**

Student Evaluation Methods

a. Debate Participation:

- Weekly Self-Evaluation of the quality of their performance on a debate based on the rubric.
- The purpose of self-evaluation is to help students improve the quality of their next debate.

b. Becoming a Debate Leader:

- Introducing a topic in the beginning of the debate with brief background information.
- Asking clarifying questions to each party for further elaboration.
- Providing concluding remarks at the end of the debate with a brief summary of the debate.

c. Epiphany of Learning (2 Reflective Papers)

- Students write about their experience of epiphany of learning, an “a-ha” moment.
- Students write about their own example of how they exercise their *phronesis* and how it leads to their praxis in their own classrooms.

Analysis of Student Learning

Weekly self-evaluation notes from students helped the instructor understand how and how much they were learning, what concerns they had, and how they wanted to improve their debate. This, in turn, helped the instructor consider how to guide their learning throughout the semester.

In the beginning of the semester, students' reflections showed that they were not familiar with the jurisprudential inquiry model and thought that they did not express themselves clearly. But students' debate skills improved over time.

Effectiveness of the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model:

Students' Voices

Student A: *On topics I did not agree, with but had to defend, enabled me to really dig deep to see the benefits and values of it which emotionally and passionately engaged me. I found myself breaking my “set in stone opinions” and truly seeing the position as my own for the time being, being able to defend it with a true heart.*

Student B: *The value of debating far exceeds that of taking tests. It also helped me with my communication skills. I had to learn to effectively share my position with poise and confidence. I learned not to get argumentative, listen at the appropriate times, be patient with teammates, and discern as to when was an appropriate time to share my argument.*

Findings:

The Effectiveness of the Jurisprudential Inquiry Model

Student C:

I am realizing that I am part of a dynamic community. Being part of the community means respecting the learning processes of my fellow teammates. This reflection along with our conversation has made me further contemplate my learning process. I believe that I am beginning to better understand, both through my observation of your teaching and our class experience, the art of inclusion. However, this is not just in theory, but applied and implemented. I am very grateful for this experience.