Premier’s HTA History Scholarship

**Using ICT to Facilitate the Teaching and Learning of Overviews in Stages 4 & 5 History**

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Aim

This study aimed to design and develop a series of 4 online lessons which cover the Overview units from the new Australian Curriculum BOS 7 – 10 History Syllabus. It was aimed at explicitly linking the content and skills presented in the syllabus through use of ICT and Critical/Creative Thinking. The lessons hope to encourage teachers and students to challenge themselves in the use of ICT in looking at history in a critical and creative manner. These lessons are now freely available online to all schools.

Planning

I planned to attend the AIS Integrators Conference in October, to get an insight into cutting edge pedagogy embedding technology. I used the months leading up to December to consult with a range of teachers and schools to decide on the delivery mode and what would be needed. During the December break, I planned to visit London to collect resources and gain deeper understanding of a range of time periods and civilization. The first few months of 2013 would be spent in developing lessons and ICT resources, then in April I would go to Canberra for the Australian History Teachers’ Association conference. Following this, I and colleagues from a range of schools would trial the lessons to see if they would work within a real world context.

**AIS Integrators Conference**

In October 2012, I attended the Association of Independent Schools ICT Integrator’s Conference “Are We There Yet?” This conference discussed current issues in ICT pedagogy and ways of engaging staff and students with technology. There was a range of speakers, including Andrew Douch, a multi-award winning Biology Teacher and technology innovator. Andrew Douch discussed the ways in which technology was changing education and gave great insights into thinking about the incorporation of technology into education. I also attended several workshops about the use of movie-making in teaching, flipped lessons. Flipping is where students watch a prepared lecture/video for homework and then come to class the next day ready to discuss it, removing content delivery from the learning space, freeing time for writing practice, deep discussion or problem solving. The day ended with a teach-meet style presentation regarding a range of teaching ideas. The conference was extremely helpful in challenging my thinking around technology.

Initial Consultation

Through contacts at HSC marking, I was able to send out a survey to History teachers marking Extension, Ancient and Modern History in November. This was beneficial as it gave an insight into schools from across the DEC, CEO and Independent sectors. Markers were given a link to an online survey, with questions including the types of technology used and frequency of use in the classroom, the kinds of lessons and Web2.0 tools that teachers felt would be useful, including research, presentation, timeline, quiz, bookmarking and other tools. Teachers were also asked about which of the General Capabilities they would like to see integrated, as well as differentiated learning and flip teaching. The feedback I received from teachers was most informative, and provided some great insights into what teachers’ requirements were. There were over 200 responses which provided a sound snapshot of what was needed for the Overviews.

School Visits

Throughout October and November, I spent time discussing online learning with ICT Integrators from a range of schools and in some instances visiting their schools to see it in action. Interviews were with a Department of Education school, a CEO systemic school, and an Independent Sector school to give a perspective across the different sectors. These visits and discussions were enlightening, as I came to realize that my initial idea of an iOS based eBook would not be appropriate. Many schools use a Windows based platform as part of their technology program, and so my proposed eBook would exclude a wide range of users. I also realized that creating whole units, as originally planned, would not work as teachers would not be able to commit that amount of time. “Grab and Go’ style, one-off lessons were deemed more accessible.

London

I arrived in London on the 28th December 2012. I had arranged for my accommodation to be close to the British Museum as that is where I planned to do the bulk of my research and resource gathering, however, other historical sites were also visited to ensure a wide ranging understanding.

**The British Museum**

As one of the world’s largest cultural institutions, a good deal of planning if I were to make my way through it effectively. I had based my route on The History of the World in 100 Objects by British Museum Director, Neil MacGregor and an iPhone app that acts as a map and guide book.

In total I spent two full days at the Museum. It is an amazing institution, and allowed me to gather ideas and insights across a range of civilisations, from Arabic seafaring instruments, to South American blood letting rituals to chalk drums from England. The museum also has separate exhibitions such as “Money”, looking at how money has changed over time, as well as one on “Living and Dying”.

As I went through the museum, while appreciating the cultural differences represented, I became increasingly aware of the similarities. For example:

I found it interesting that these faces, all similar in size and made from the same material - jade - spanned continents and millennia. There were countless other examples; bird headed deities, all symbolizing new life and resurrection; the similar representation of bulls across ancient societies, and the development of writing. Another deeply inspiring and evocative moment was looking upon the stone cutting tool from Olduvai Gorge, 1.8 million years old and realising that this was the birth of technology as we know it.

My experiences in the British Museum committed me to developing lessons around humanity’s connectedness, while still celebrating each culture’s unique contributions. In particular, I was able to gather resources and insights directly pertinent to the Overviews for Stage 4.

**Imperial War Museum**

The Imperial War Museum has three sites, and it was not feasible to attend all in the time available. The Museum was also closing for major renovations on the 1st January 2013, so attendance was somewhat urgent. While many of the displays were already dismantled, the two exhibits that I needed to cover - the Holocaust, and life during the Blitz -were still open.

Having been to the Sydney Jewish Museum several times, it was interesting to note the similarities and differences in presentation in the two institutions. Of note was the way in which the IWM summed up the Nazi regime’s commitment to eugenics - a hair and eye colour kit - used to discriminate against Jewish people.

The visits here informed my Overviews for Stage 5, as well as providing helpful links for the School Developed Course in Stage 5.

**Hampton Court Palace**

Hampton Court Palace was initially used by Henry VIII, and by successive kings throughout the Tudor, Jacobean and following eras. It was useful visiting here to get an insight into the “high” history, that is Kings and parliaments, as opposed to “low” history, that is, the history of the people. The kitchens, in particular, provided an insight into early industrialization, cooking on a grand scale. This tied in with the Overviews from Stage 5, looking at the transition to the early Modern period. The architecture was also helpful in showing changes in technology and art over time.

**Victoria and Albert Museum**

This museum offered the opportunity to examine the eras of early modern to modern history in terms of design. I wanted to expose students to the impact of mass production on access to luxury goods. Previously, jewellery and china were only available to the upper classes, however with the development of industrialisation, these became more accessible to the masses owing to their price and supply. As this museum specialises in design, it was also useful in focusing on the impact of exploration, imperialism and trade on everyday life, through pottery and foods.

**Charles Dickens Walk**

This walk was led by renowned author Richard Jones, and took the visitor through various parts of London as experienced by Charles Dickens. This walk was selected as the study of the Industrial Revolution is one of the main points of difference in the new Australian History curriculum. Dickens’ London shows all levels of British society at the time, from the beggars of the Seven Dials, to the middle class of the Temple and the Strand, through to the upper echelons of society. The walk was most informative, particularly about issues such as the Window Tax and the Clock Tax. The Industrial Revolution had a massive impact on the movement of peoples and also the environment, an impact which was highlighted through the tour.

**Petrie Museum**

The Petrie Museum is of note particularly for its focus on ancient pottery. This was useful as I had always intended one of the lessons to be using patterns and evidence to draw conclusions in the Overview for Stage 4. Often we focus on the “big” issues, such as war, law and society; however when it comes down to it, life without a pot in ancient times wouldn’t have been much of a life at all. This visit allowed me to photograph a series of pots which were then turned into resources for a lesson in which students had to place the pots in the correct chronological order, developing critical and creative thinking, problem solving and numeracy.

**Tower of London**

The Tower of London has been an operating site for almost 1000 years, having commenced building by King William in 1066 after his victory over the English. The site was useful as a glimpse into medieval thinking and then how this was adapted over time to suit changing needs. It was useful for the second Stage 4 Overview covering the transition from the ancient to the modern world.

Bath

**The Roman Baths**

The Roman Baths, known in early times as Aquae Sulis, or the Waters of Sulis, were significant in showing how ancient cultures merged on contact. Although the hot springs themselves had been there for many thousands of years before the arrival of the Romans, they were quickly adapted by them into their own bathing culture, along with the local goddess, Sulis, who was then tied to the Roman goddess, Minerva. This new Sulis Minerva was adopted by the local population. The Temple at Bath, of which little remains, also showed the integration of gods Belanus (Celtic) and Oceanus (Roman). I saw this as leading students to a discussion around multiculturalism being a long standing concept.

**Jane Austen: Assembly Rooms**

Bath also offered the opportunity to see the Industrial Revolution from a different perspective. In London, the negative aspects of the Revolution were present – the poverty, the pollution, but in Bath there are still the Assembly Rooms, where many balls, card parties and so on, referenced in Austen’s novels, could have taken place. This led to the idea of using literature as a means to understand the impact of the Industrial Revolution, with Charles Dickens representing the seamy side, and Austen the more idealised. Which, ultimately, is more accurate. This would go onto be the basis of a flipped lesson, where students would listen to extracts from the novels for homework, before furthering and constructing their own understanding of that period.

Kent

**Old Sarum**

Old Sarum is a hill fort in Salisbury. It dates back as far as 3000BCE, but was converted into a hill fort during the Iron Age. It was used as fortifications against successive invasions by Vikings, Saxons and Normans. After the Norman invasion, a large cathedral was built there. This story could have been told a hundred times across many countries, but there is one interesting difference - in 1219, in the interests of trade, the cathedral, the castle and the town within its walls were moved down the hill and near the river. This was fascinating and demonstrates how money trumps religion and defence. In the Middle Ages we often think that religion was paramount, but this is a fine example of when the Church’s materialistic nature overtook its dedication to sanctity.

**Stonehenge**

Stonehenge is an ancient monolithic monument that was built between 3000 and 2000BCE by the Beaker People. There are many notions as to the reasons for it being built, how it was built, which leads into an interesting discussion for the Ancient World Stage 4 Overview. What prompts an ancient civilisation to do this? A comparison and contrast with other ancient structures such as the Giza Pyramids, the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro would also be interesting in terms of technology and administration.

**Fishbourne Palace**

Fishbourne Palace is an ancient Romano-British villa in the south of England. Again, it connects with the Ancient World Stage 4 Overview, looking at what was significant for civilisations. The Palace contains amazing mosaics, which then prompted thinking around the question, “Is art necessary for civilization to exist and develop?” When looking back at all ancient civilisations, there is a commitment to art and beauty, with an exception perhaps being Sparta in Greece (although historians still debate this). This then connected back to an exhibit at the British Museum – Ice Age Art. Looking at some of the earliest evidence from humanity, we see a commitment to art. Why is this?

**Portchester Castle**

Portchester Castle is located on the south coast of England. It was first established as a fortification in Romano-British times, and the walls from that time are still standing as part of the castle. The castle had been used continuously, in various guises, until the 19th Century when it was converted to a gaol for French prisoners from the Napoleonic Wars, again linking to three of the four Overviews in terms of relevance. Small objects from the Castle’s past also inform the changing interpretations, such as dice made from bones; pipes; and jewellery. It is the little things which often reveal more than the large.

The tour of London and Southern England was informative and transformative, and challenged my thinking in many, many ways. Upon reflection, however, it was perhaps a little ambitious to cover the entire history of the world in nine days.

The Website

Upon my return, I embarked upon building the website. I examined a number of options, but Weebly had been recommended by educator Andrew Douch for its ease and appearance. I decided that each Overview would have its own page, and each page would include lessons, resources, relevant videos embedded, links to articles and other websites, and glossaries.

It took time to develop a lesson plan that contained all the essential elements to model best practice: the syllabus outcomes, the general capabilities, the historical concepts etc. as well as the actual lesson itself. I had also spent the entire period of the scholarship sourcing Web 2.0 tools, working out how to use them, evaluating them, linking them to the lessons I had envisioned, and creating help guides. I cannot emphasise enough how time consuming this process was, although my ICT learning curve was exponential.

I asked teachers to trial some of the lessons to see if they worked within a classroom, and the feedback was positive, so I felt I was on the right track.

The website was launched at the NSW HTA State Conference in July, 2013, and was accompanied by a presentation on how to approach teaching the Overviews. As part of the presentation, I promoted the Scholarship as a valuable professional learning opportunity. Feedback regarding the presentation and the website has been very positive.

Conclusion

I have little hesitation in saying that I have learnt more than I thought possible as a result of participating in the Scholarship.

* I have had my thinking challenged about History in a way that has really opened up my pedagogy.
* I have learned a great deal about meaningful integration of ICT into teaching and learning.
* I have forged strong ties with the NSW HTA, am now a member of its Executive, and have developed a strong professional learning network.
* I have developed further time management and organisational skills.
* I have raised my professional profile.

It was a challenging and definitely rewarding experience, and one that I truly value. I thank the Department of Premier and Cabinet and NSW History Teachers’ Association for this opportunity and its support.