
The Creating Communities of Innovation Model for Inquiry-Driven Innovation

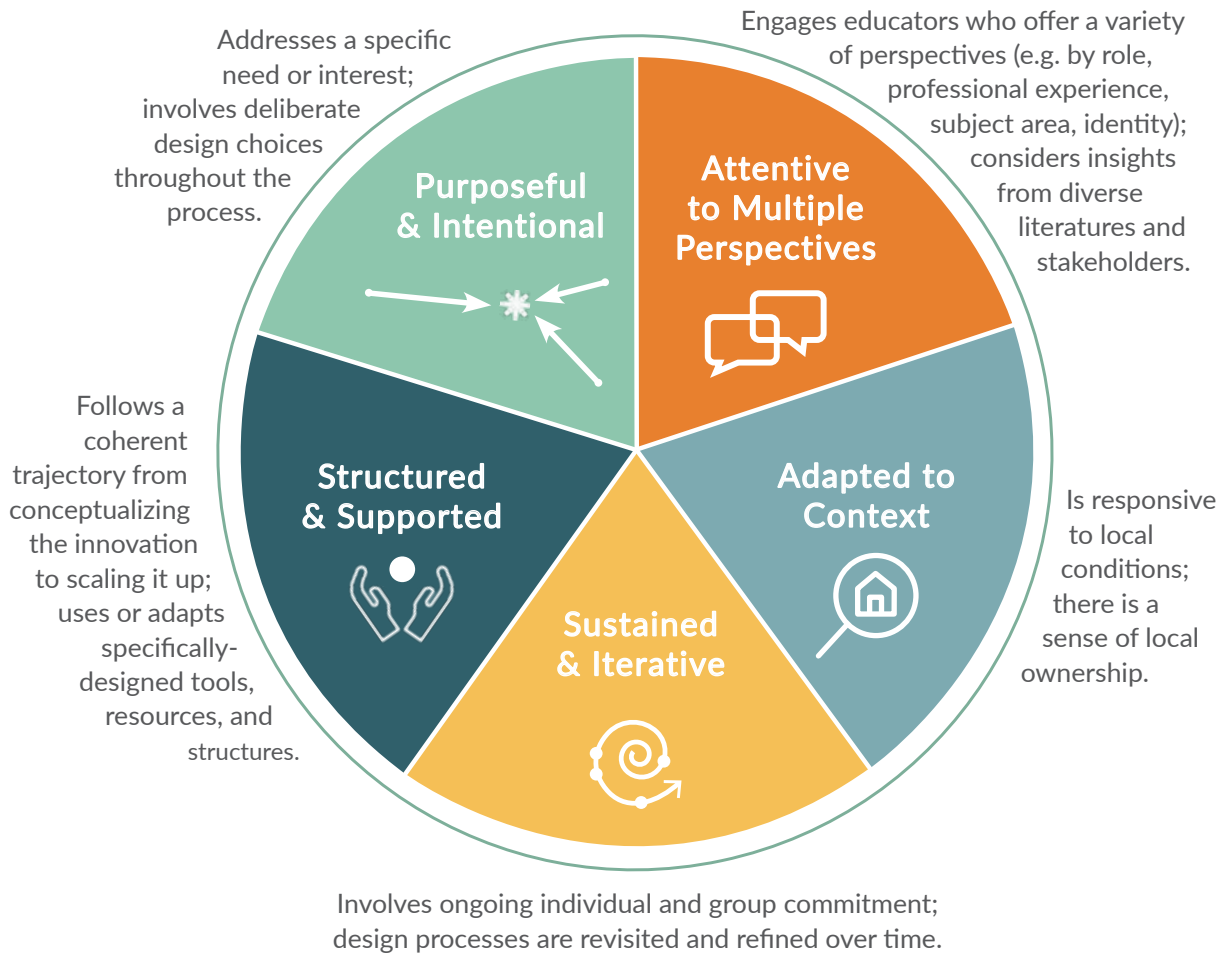


Here we present and unpack the *Creating Communities of Innovation Model for Inquiry-Driven Innovation*. This model was developed towards the end of the second year of the initial study as our research team attempted to distill the key elements of our collective efforts to promote inquiry-driven innovation. Our UAE-based partnering teachers and administrators provided input on this model, and helped us hone and refine our language.

The CCI model empowers communities and individuals to pursue innovation projects in their schools and classrooms through structures that facilitate collective work, an arc of activities, and a set of tools and other resources. Within this model, *inquiry-driven innovation* is defined as an ongoing process that empowers individuals and communities to pursue positive change that is relevant and responsive to their contexts. Within these contexts, *inquiry-driven innovators* work collectively to pursue positive change that is responsive and relevant to their contexts.

The following graphic is intended to distill the five qualities that are integral to the CCI model. This model promotes work that is *purposeful and intentional, attentive to multiple perspectives, adapted to context,*

sustained and iterative, and structured and supported. The circular format of the graphic is intended to convey that there is a non-hierarchical relationship among these qualities and that they connect to form a coherent whole.



Purposeful and intentional

Addresses a specific need or interest; involves deliberate design choices throughout the process.

The Creating Communities of Innovation model for inquiry-driven innovation supports educators to work on innovations that address a specific need or interest, that is, innovations that are purposeful and explicitly designed to promote positive change within their local contexts rather than innovation for innovation’s sake. Throughout our work with our teacher colleagues we consistently saw how teams of educators worked on innovations that addressed something that felt important to their schools and the teaching and learning that took place within them.

The kind of professional development envisaged by the CCI project is intentional in that educators are supported to make choices and decisions that reflect the purpose of what they are trying to do in terms of their

specific innovations. Reflection is a key component of the CCI model and educators are repeatedly invited to consider *why* they are doing certain things. The iterative nature of the model also promotes intentionality: from the outset of their engagement with the CCI model, educators are supported to observe and listen carefully to what is happening in their schools and classrooms and to respond thoughtfully to the data and documentation that they are collecting and interpreting in order to advance their innovations. Meanwhile, various other tools—such as the Population, Innovation, Outcome and the Theory of Action tools—are designed to help educators focus in concrete ways on who they want to impact and how they are going to do so.

Attentive to multiple perspectives

Engages educators who offer a variety of perspectives; considers insights from diverse literatures and stakeholders.

The Creating Communities of Innovation model for inquiry-driven innovation recommends that educators come together in study groups that are designed to engage a variety of perspectives. Part of the power of the CCI model comes from facilitating learning experiences that bring together professionals who do not habitually work together and who perhaps underestimate how much they could learn from one another's expertise and practices. Accordingly, study groups are recommended to include members who differ by role and level of responsibility within the school, by degree and type of professional experience, by subject area, by age-level taught, and by personal identity—for example, by gender, race/ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and/or national or regional identity. In this regard, the CCI model reflects research that indicates that diverse groups tend to be more effective than more homogeneous groups in terms of problem solving and generating creative ideas—in no small part because of the different perspectives and ways of thinking that diverse group members can bring to the table. Furthermore, having study group members be drawn from different areas of a school means that the group's innovation focus is likely to be relevant to a wide variety of stakeholders and to eventually take hold and be scaled across the institution.

The CCI model for inquiry-driven innovation also fosters attentiveness to multiple perspectives in ways that go beyond the composition of study groups. All the tools and structures that are incorporated into the CCI model, and which draw in part from decades of Project Zero research, are designed to generate or surface multiple ideas and perspectives. For example, thinking routines such as *See, Think, Wonder* and *Connect, Extend, Challenge* are incorporated into many of the tools. These thinking routines are designed to give individual learners voice within a group and to make the group's learning visible in ways that pay attention to multiple learner perspectives. Additionally, participants are encouraged to observe and listen carefully to a variety of stakeholders including students, teachers, parents, and other community members as they conceive of, initiate, and develop their innovations. They are also encouraged to consult with and draw inspiration from a variety of sources, including ones that lie beyond the field of education. Finally, the concept of networking *across* as well as *within* schools means that study group members are exposed to a variety of practices, ideas, and learning environments beyond their immediate contexts. This kind of cross-fertilization among schools can serve to encourage or endorse the work that study groups are doing; at other times it calls into question some of their assumptions or generates new ideas.

Adapted to context

Is responsive to local conditions and addresses specific needs or interests; there is a sense of local ownership.

The arc of activities developed by the Creating Communities of Innovation model for inquiry-driven innovation begins with the development of inquiry skills that are designed to promote educators' attentiveness to the local context and the viewing of it with fresh eyes. From the start, they are encouraged to develop innovations that make sense within their local contexts and that draw from multiple perspectives. This emphasis on local adaptation helps to empower educators because they are able to tap into their own experiences and knowledge of a particular context in order to generate innovations that address local needs or interests. As a result, educators experience a great deal of ownership and pride when they practice inquiry-driven innovation: for example, several of the CCI study groups we worked with gave specific names to their locally adapted innovations as a means of signaling that these innovations were special and unique to their schools and something to be proud of. Through the work of the CCI project, we have learned that school-based innovations are far more likely to take hold if they are relevant and responsive to the local communities they are designed to serve.

Sustained and iterative

Involves ongoing individual and group commitment; design processes are revisited and refined over time.

The Creating Communities of Innovation model for inquiry-driven innovation stands as a counterpoint to *ad hoc* or even random ways of approaching professional development in schools. The CCI model is intended to be implemented over a period of at least one to two years, with the innovations and practices enduring well beyond that time period. The CCI model promotes the concept of sustained and ongoing learning journeys—at the individual, study group, and whole community level. Through this model study groups are invited to reflect on and develop their collective stories of developing an innovation together, including the challenges or obstacles that they have overcome. A great deal of individual and group commitment is required. However, many educators are precisely looking for the kind of sustained professional development that enables them to feel like they are constantly growing and evolving in their practice and becoming empowered to make original and positive contributions within their local contexts.

The CCI model for inquiry-driven innovation is iterative in that innovations are developed by educators through a process that involves prototyping, implementing, and then eventually scaling their innovations, all the while deploying inquiry skills to help them refine and further develop their innovations and take stock of the impact they are having. The educator resources presented later in this toolkit are intended to be revisited and re-used over time; for example, the Theory of Action tool is intended to be a living document that is continually being revised and updated, including via the Theory of Action Tuning Protocol.

Structured and supported

Follows a coherent trajectory from conceptualizing the innovation to scaling it up; uses or adapts specifically-designed tools, resources, and structures.

Educators need structures in place to facilitate their growth and development: individual educators are simply too busy to carve out enough time for sustained professional development or to engage in coordinated networking with other colleagues. This model proposes weekly study group meetings that follow an arc of activities, as well as periodic cross-study group community meetings which can happen in person or virtually.



The Creating Communities of Innovation structure requires commitment, and optimally direct involvement, from administrators within a school. While some of the study groups we have worked with developed creative ways to meet or coordinate with one another because of scheduling difficulties, study groups ideally need protected time to be able to meet with one another on a weekly basis.

The CCI model for inquiry-driven innovation crucially involves *supporting* teachers to develop innovations. A number of the teachers we have worked with contrasted doing individual action research projects with the CCI model, noting that the energy and psychological support they enjoyed from being part of a study group and wider learning community made the CCI experience far more satisfying and impactful—both for themselves as individuals and for their schools as organizations. It is not easy to take risks by introducing innovations into established practices: by supporting one another to overcome challenges and by having a shared collective experience, educators who work together are able to achieve much more than they can individually. Moreover, they can develop very close bonds with one another, in ways that are sometimes surprising if they are working with people they would not ordinarily encounter within their schools. At the whole community level, educators can become invested in one another's work and feel a sense of collective pride at being involved in a larger network that speaks to their broader professional identities in ways that transcend their local school contexts.

