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Inquiry-based learning: Necessary for teachers and students

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Abstract

Inquiry learning involves developing questions, making observations, doing research to find out what information is already recorded, developing methods for experiments, developing instruments for data collection, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, outlining possible explanations and creating predictions for future study. Inquiry-based learning is fundamental for the development of higher order thinking skills. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, the ability to analyze, synthesizes, and evaluates information or new understandings indicate a high level of thinking. Teachers should be encouraging divergent thinking and allowing students the freedom to ask their own questions and to learn the effective strategies for discovering the answers. The higher order thinking skills that students have the opportunity to develop during inquiry activities will assist in the critical thinking skills that they will be able to transfer to other subjects. This paper tries to highlight the importance inquiry-based learning of in modern era for teachers and students.

Keywords: Analyze, Synthesizes, Evaluates

1. Introduction

Inquiry-based learning is fundamental for the development of higher order thinking skills. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, the ability to analyze, synthesizes, and evaluates information or new understandings indicate a high level of thinking. Teachers should be encouraging divergent thinking and allowing students the freedom to ask their own questions and to learn the effective strategies for discovering the answers. The higher order thinking skills that students have the opportunity to develop during inquiry activities will assist in the critical thinking skills that they will be able to transfer to other subjects. The process of inquiring begins with gathering information and data through applying the human senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Infants make connections to the world by inquiring. They observe faces that come near, they grasp objects, they put things in their mouths, and they turn toward voices. It is natural. Although it is most often associated with science, inquiry-based learning is used to engage students of all ages, to learn by exploration and discovery. Learning and teaching method that prioritizes student questions, ideas and analyses.

From a student point-of-view, inquiry-based learning focuses on investigating an open question or problem. They must use evidence-based reasoning and creative problem-solving to reach a conclusion, which they must defend or present.

From a teacher point-of-view, inquiry-based teaching focuses on moving students beyond general curiosity into the realms of critical thinking and understanding. You must encourage students to ask questions and support them through the investigation process, understanding when to begin and how to structure an inquiry activity.

Using methods such as guided research, document analysis and question-and-answer sessions, you can run inquiry activities in the form of:

- Case studies
- Group projects
- Research projects
- Field work, especially for science lessons

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- Unique exercises tailored to your students

2. Types of inquiry-based learning

There are different kinds of inquiry-based learning, which become increasingly structured and suit different classrooms:

- **Confirmation Inquiry:** You give students a question, its answer and the method of reaching this answer. Their goal is to build investigation and critical-thinking skills, learning how the specific method works.
- **Structured Inquiry:** You give students an open question and an investigation method. They must use the method to craft an evidence-backed conclusion.
- **Guided Inquiry:** You give students an open question. Typically in groups, they design investigation methods to reach a conclusion.
- **Open Inquiry:** You give students time and support. They pose original questions that they investigate through their own methods, and eventually present their results to discuss and expand.

Regardless of the type, inquiry-based learning aims to develop students' abilities to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information — indications of high-level thinking according to Bloom's Taxonomy.

3. Necessary for teacher

- Teacher is Facilitator in IBL environment
- Place needs of students and their ideas at the center
- Don't wait for the perfect question, pose multiple open-ended questions.
- Work towards common goal of understanding
- Remain faithful to the students' line of inquiry
- Teach directly on a need-to-know basis
- Encourage students to demonstrate learning using a range of media

4. Necessary for students

- Nurture student passions and talents
- Empower student voice and honor student choice
- Increase motivation and engagement
- Foster curiosity and a love of learning
- Make research meaningful and develop research skills
- Deepen understanding to go beyond facts and content
- Fortify the importance of asking good questions
- Enable students to take ownership of their learning and to reach their goals
- Solve the problems of tomorrow in the classrooms of today
- Helps develop information literacy
- Helps develop critical thinking skills
- Results in better long term retention of information
- Encourages self-direction
- Reinforces physical, emotional and cognitive growth
- Encourages development of interpersonal and team skills
- Emphasizes intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards
- Validates the knowledge and experiences of students, including those from minorities and disadvantaged groups

5. Other benefits to students and teachers

- Reinforces Curriculum Content

- “Warms Up” the Brain for Learning
- Promotes a Deeper Understanding of Content
- Helps Make Learning Rewarding
- Builds Initiative and Self-Direction
- Works in Almost Any Classroom
- Offers Differentiated Instruction

6. Conclusion

Inquiry-based learning should be a collaborative effort involving all students, teachers, media specialists, administrators and parents. Inquiry learning involves developing questions, making observations, doing research to find out what information is already recorded, developing methods for experiments, developing instruments for data collection, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, outlining possible explanations and creating predictions for future study.

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