



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.031 (SJIF 2025)

Inquiry-Based Learning for Inclusive Classrooms

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DOI No. **03.2021-11278686**

DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doilink/11.2025-54623573/IRJHIS2511023>

Abstract:

The need to develop more inclusive classrooms and the growing requirements of students have made inquiry-based learning a hot topic in today's mainstream classrooms. This article discusses the advantages of inquiry-based learning, the types and models of IBL, and strategies for using IBL in inclusive classrooms. Inquiry-based learning experiences foster the development of skills including communication, organisation, problem-solving, problem-posing, tolerance, grit, self-efficacy, finding connections, applying new knowledge, attentive listening, and research abilities. For students to learn how to work with others who believe and act differently from them, inclusive classrooms are essential. In the end, employing inquiry to establish an inclusive learning environment enables teachers to differentiate instruction and students to select their own learning route. An effective teaching strategy that encourages critical thinking, actively engages students, and links classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios is inquiry-based learning for an inclusive classroom. The Teachers may establish a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes inquiry and in-depth comprehension by putting the models and tactics described into practice.

Keywords: Inquiry-Based Learning, Inclusive Classrooms

Introduction:

An important question is the first step in the learner-centred approach known as inquiry-based learning. Students research the subject to get the solutions, honing their language and skills in the process. The student actively participates in both their education and the process of decision-making.

According to Lee et al. (2004), "Inquiry-based learning is an array of classroom practices that promote student learning through guided and, increasingly, independent investigation of complex questions and problems, often for which there is no single answer".

Inquiry-based learning helps students become more adept at asking insightful questions, figuring out what needs to be learnt and the resources needed to answer them, and sharing what they have learnt with others. It motivates children to research real-world issues and pose questions. Students actively participate in the learning process and have the chance to pursue their innate curiosity in this kind of learning environment. Students make connections between what they learn in the classroom and the actual world through this experiential learning. It has been demonstrated that inquiry-based learning enhances critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

The core of inquiry-based learning is curiosity and a desire to learn more. This method appeals to the curiosity of younger students in particular and enables them to learn and apply English in authentic and significant ways. There are many different learning strategies, but not all of them are ideal for every student. Students can pursue their education in a variety of ways that best fit their interests and abilities, thanks to inquiry-based learning.

IBL can work with everyone because it is such a versatile approach. It is a multimodal technique that provides many alternatives for learning in many ways when used correctly. It makes learning a language authentic. Students are researching a subject that truly interests them. They discover new knowledge that they were previously unaware of, thanks to the language they pick up during the investigation.

Asking questions is the entire purpose of inquiry-based learning. Students must first determine what they already know and what they do not. This step in the process will assist students in formulating new queries for which they are unsure of the answers. And it's so inspiring to find answers to our questions! IBL more broadly refers to inquiry in the classroom, while it has several specific applications, including case-study and project-based learning. According to constructivist thinkers like John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky, inquiry in the classroom encourages students to come to their own understanding of subjects and places the burden of learning on them.

Students are encouraged to develop useful and transferable skills through inquiry-based learning, such as: Realistic goal-setting and goal-tracking, Time and priority management, Information gathering, filtering, and integration, Critical thinking, Communication of ideas and learning, Self-assessment and reflection

Types of Inquiry-Based Learning:

1. **Structured Inquiry:** This methodical technique teaches students how to pose questions and look into real-world issues. Science classrooms frequently employ this kind of inquiry-based learning, where students are given an issue to research and are instructed on how to apply the scientific method to solve it.
2. **The Method of Problem-Based Inquiry:** An approach to inquiry-based learning that focuses on problem-solving is called problem-based inquiry. Students are given a real-world

challenge to address in this kind of approach. Students are expected to apply what they have learnt to solve a real-world problem in maths and engineering classrooms, which frequently use this kind of inquiry-based learning.

3. **Guided Inquiry:** This kind of inquiry-based learning is led by the teacher. With this kind of approach, the instructor helps the students ask questions and come up with answers to real-world issues while guiding them through the inquiry process. Classrooms in elementary and intermediate schools frequently employ this kind of inquiry-based learning.
4. **Open Enquiry:** The open-ended inquiry approach is a freer-form approach to inquiry-based learning. Students are free to explore their interests and pose questions about the subject they are studying in this kind of learning setting. This kind of inquiry-based learning is frequently employed in humanities courses, where students are required to thoroughly investigate a subject and discuss many points of view.

Advantages of Learning through Inquiry:

- **Promotes Critical Thinking:** By challenging facts and coming up with original ideas, students improve their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.
- **Enhances Problem-Solving Capabilities:** Students get the ability to think creatively and come up with answers by investigating real-world issues.
- **Promotes Creativity:** Innovative solutions and creative thinking are fostered by independent investigation.
- **Enhances Communication Skills:** Students' communication skills are enhanced when concepts are explained as they solve problems.
- **Links Learning to the Real World:** By investigating real-world issues, students can recognise the significance of what they are learning in the classroom.
- **Enhances Understanding of Difficult Topics:** Practical investigation facilitates a deeper understanding of difficult topics.
- **Promotes Engaged Learning:** Students who actively participate in their education have higher recall rates and a greater commitment to the subject matter.

How to use Inquiry-Based Learning in Inclusive Classrooms:

Students in 21st century classrooms come from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, and experiences. Teachers in the twenty-first century are prepared to address the needs of all students and provide an inclusive and welcoming environment by using student-centred pedagogy. It is our duty to make sure that every child is emotionally, socially, and academically ready for experiences outside of the classroom. However, there is a widespread question about the best ways to prepare pupils for both schooling and careers.

One advantage of inquiry-based learning is that it gives teachers in the classroom a method of

instruction that links learning to real-world situations and is backed by Dewey and Piaget. kids are exposed to rich learning experiences in inclusive, inquiry-based classrooms that leverage their skills to improve learning for all children rather than limit them. In the quickly evolving world of today, inclusive educators must train kids to be effective problem solvers, critical thinkers, and adaptable team players.

In an inclusive general education classroom, all students—disabled or not—learn alongside one another as whole members of the community. The way that instruction, resources, and supports are designed allows all children to participate meaningfully, access grade-level content, and be held to high standards. Instead of moving the students to fit the lesson, we adapt the lesson to fit them using strategies like co-teaching, universal design for learning, and targeted accommodations. Everyone is therefore in an environment where academic advancement, self-reliance, and a sense of belonging are the standard.

Here are several strategies for applying it in inclusive classrooms-

1. Start with a question- An inquiry-driven lesson is most effectively initiated by asking a question. This will motivate students to think critically about the topic and generate their own queries.
 2. Allow for Exploration- Following the question, give students the chance to conduct their own investigations. This will enhance their understanding of the topic.
 3. Encourage Dialogue- Urge students to engage in conversations with one another regarding their perspectives. This will further deepen their understanding of the subject matter.
 4. Provide Resources- Ensure that students have access to materials that will enable them to explore the topic. This will facilitate a better comprehension of the subject. Educators might also suggest online educational tools to help students grasp the content more effectively.
 5. Summarize the Knowledge Gained- Be sure to include a recap of the lesson's key points at the end. This will aid students in better retaining the information learned.
- According to the statistics, there will probably be one or more neurodivergent pupils in every class. But what is meant by neurodiversity? In reality, it's a catch-all phrase that recognises the variations in how people's brains function. Dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, or autism spectrum disorder are examples of specific learning differences that some students may have.

Due to these learning variations, some activities may be difficult for students. Attention, organisation, working memory, time management, sensory perception, and processing speed are a few areas where pupils may struggle. Each of these factors influences how learning takes place. This means that for certain neurodivergent learners, even seemingly straightforward tasks like reading a brief text or reproducing a line from the board can be difficult. However, these variations in brain function also bring many advantages, such as lateral and creative thinking, resourcefulness, empathy, and problem-solving abilities. IBL gives teachers and students room to develop these abilities.

Because inquiry-based learning is not dependent on a predetermined list of tasks, it enables us to focus the activities on the unique abilities of the students. Depending on the level and nature of the inquiry, it may be completed in a single lesson or over the course of a term. Students can use a variety of media, including texts, audio, video, and artwork, to obtain knowledge. Additionally, the inquiry may be conducted in couples, small groups, alone, or with the entire class. The inquiry cycle, a series of steps that occur in a particular order, is typically followed by an inquiry. They are as follows:

Question & Plan- In order to respond to the main question, students will need to gather information for each question. The questions could then be written on a poster or inquiry wall. You and the students can submit other queries and concepts they wish to look into here.

Research & Discover- Students can start their research as soon as they have their queries. The research could be completed as homework or during class time. Students can find the solutions to their enquiries in a variety of ways. They could read through books in the school library, go to reliable animal-related websites, and watch animal documentaries on TV or YouTube. You may take the class on a field trip to see their neighbourhood or invite an expert, such as a representative of a nearby animal sanctuary.

Organise & Present- After gathering all of their data, students organise how to discuss their findings with the class. Let children make their own decisions if at all feasible. For instance, children could make a YouTube documentary, perform a play, make a poster presentation, or make mini-books for the classroom library.

Reflect- Students reflect on their research and consider what they have learnt and how they have learnt it during this phase. Did their investigation succeed? As part of the reflection process, you could ask students the following questions. At the beginning, what did I know? What was I unaware of? Now, what do I know? What should I be aware of? How successful was I?

Models to use in the classroom- The following models can be employed in classrooms:

1. The Question Model - One of the simplest frameworks for inquiry-based learning is the question model. It entails posing queries to pupils regarding the subject you are teaching. They will be inspired to consider the subject matter critically as a result.

2. The Problem-Based Learning Model – Another great choice for inquiry-based learning is the problem-based learning paradigm. With this approach, pupils are given a task to solve. They will have to consider the issue critically.

3. The Project-Based Learning Model - Students can thoroughly investigate a subject through project-based learning. With this approach, you assign students a project that relates to the subject you are teaching.

4. The Inquiry Cycle Model - Students can ask questions, research a subject, and then present their

results using the inquiry cycle approach. With this approach, students can delve deeply into a subject and present their findings to others.

The 5E's model of inquiry:

1. **Engage:** Students are faced with a difficult scenario or "wicked problem," which triggers enquiries and activates prior knowledge.
2. **Explore:** Students research the issue or circumstance, test their preconceived notions, and consider novel concepts. Frequently, in groups
3. **Explain:** Students acquire and apply new knowledge when they describe the circumstance or issue in their own words.
4. **Elaborate:** Students expand and strengthen their knowledge by applying it to novel situations.
5. **Evaluate:** Students consider what they know and how they have learnt. This is frequently also where assessment takes place, and a new cycle begins with what was previously investigated and discovered at the basis of a fresh scenario or challenge to investigate.

Conclusion:

An active learning strategy that gives students a voice and choice is inquiry-based learning. Because they participate in the decision-making process and are encouraged to take ownership of their education, students are motivated to study. Because of its flexibility and collaborative nature, the classroom is a welcoming environment where students genuinely want to learn. An effective teaching strategy that encourages critical thinking, actively engages students, and links classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios is inquiry-based learning for inclusive classrooms. Teachers may establish a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes inquiry and in-depth comprehension by putting the models and tactics described into practice.

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