

PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING AS AN INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY IN THREE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN JOHANNESBURG

By **MICHELLE DECKER (9501485H)**

ABSTRACT

Inquiry-based learning (IBL) is a pedagogy that requires learners to answer questions or solve problems actively and collaboratively. The purpose of this research was to uncover the extent to which this way of learning allowed for the inclusive participation of all learners. The study investigated the inclusive potential of IBL from the teacher and learners' perspectives, by taking their unique experiences into account. A mixed methods approach was utilised and the data-collection tools consisted of document analysis, classroom observation, participant interviews and learner self- reflection questionnaires. The context comprised of three independent, girls' schools in Johannesburg where one IBL lesson was observed in each school. The participants were selected based on their participation in these lessons, this included a total of five teachers and 117 learners in the sample. The research findings concluded that IBL did have the potential to be an inclusive pedagogy. The reflections from both teachers and learners, were mostly positive and they were able to describe feeling of inclusion, confidence and enjoyment in their learning. The teacher and learners' experiences reflected congruence and similarities in their reflections. There are areas that need to be monitored in order to ensure that IBL's inclusive potential is to be met. These include the structuring of the inquiry and engagement with content, skills and knowledge development, peer interactions and collaboration, the learners' individual characteristics, teacher support, the use of technology and the implementation of the lesson. As much as these factors need to be monitored for exclusion, they could also contribute towards to the inclusive potential of IBL. The limitations of this study were focused on the lack of potential generalizability of the results for a larger population, this is due to the narrow context of girls' independent schools and the further narrowing of focus on the intermediate phase. An IBL lesson may require a longer observation than this study allowed. These limitations allow for opportunities for further study. This, coupled with some variations in results in the different schools, could lead to exciting research opportunities.

Keywords

exclusion, inclusion, independent schools, inquiry-based learning, intermediate phase, pedagogy, problem-based learning, scaffolding.