

Inquiry-based Learning: Improving South African Schools

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ABSTRACT A common thread in contemporary research on school effectiveness and school improvement is, inter alia, the continuous introduction of new strategies to promote learning in schools. One of the more recent strategies to be introduced in South African schools is that of 'inquiry-based' learning. The use of inquiry as a tool to strengthen learning in schools has been documented and discussed extensively in the research literature, but very little has been written on this concept locally. This paper raises issues that South African schools face as they engage in inquiry-based learning. The paper, based on an empirical study in South African schools, begins by describing what inquiry-based learning entails and distinguishes inquiry-based learning from other learning activities. It continues in highlighting the rise of inquiry-based learning as a potentially useful and meaningful way to improve learning outcomes and concludes with qualitative evidence that inquiry-based learning can assure more effective schools.