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The Inquiry Learning Strategy

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Abstract: *Inquiry learning is a student-centered instructional approach designed to systematically develop learners' intellectual abilities through active exploration and investigation. This study aims to examine four main aspects of inquiry learning: (1) the basic concept of inquiry learning strategies, (2) the principles underlying inquiry learning, (3) the steps involved in implementing inquiry learning strategies, and (4) the role of teachers in facilitating inquiry-based learning. The study employs a library research method using descriptive qualitative analysis of various educational literature sources. This approach is grounded in constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience and critical thinking in constructing knowledge and understanding. The findings reveal that the fundamental concept of inquiry learning focuses on the process of searching for and discovering knowledge through individual and collaborative exploration. Inquiry learning is guided by key principles, including intellectual development, interaction, investigation, critical thinking, and conclusion drawing. Its implementation generally involves several stages: orientation, problem identification, hypothesis formulation, data collection, hypothesis testing, and conclusion making. Within this framework, teachers serve as facilitators, motivators, and guides who support students throughout the learning process. The study concludes that the success of inquiry learning strategies largely depends on teachers' ability to create a conducive learning environment that encourages students to actively explore, think critically, and develop their full potential.*

Keywords: *Inquiry Learning Strategy; Learning Principles; Inquiry Process; Teacher Role.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar for national progress and the improvement of citizens' quality of life. Through quality education, a nation can develop a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce capable of contributing to economic, social, and cultural advancement. Recognizing the importance of education, the Indonesian government has undertaken various initiatives to improve educational quality, including providing operational support for schools, implementing teacher training programs, and conducting teacher certification processes. In addition, curriculum reforms have been continuously introduced to ensure that education remains relevant to technological advancements and the evolving demands of society (Depin et al., 2024).

The development of high-quality human resources is closely linked to the effectiveness of educational practices. In primary and secondary education, the learning process plays a crucial role in fostering scientific thinking and critical thinking skills among students. To provide meaningful learning experiences, educators must select instructional models and approaches that align with students' needs, the characteristics of the subject matter, and curriculum requirements. A learning model refers to a systematic approach used to facilitate effective and sustainable learning experiences. Therefore, teachers need to understand and implement appropriate learning models that can enhance student motivation and improve learning outcomes. However, conventional teacher-centered approaches continue to dominate many classrooms, where students often act as passive recipients of information rather than active participants in the learning process (Hidayatullah & Widhyastuti, 2025).

One of the major challenges currently facing education is the limited effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. Students are often not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop critical thinking skills during the learning process. As a result, many learners may possess theoretical knowledge but struggle to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. This occurs because students are frequently encouraged to memorize and store information rather than understand its relevance and practical application in everyday life. Consequently, learning becomes disconnected from meaningful experiences and fails to foster deeper understanding (Afi Parnawi, 2023).

A significant factor contributing to this issue is the continued use of monotonous and less diverse instructional approaches. In many cases, students focus on memorizing content without truly comprehending the underlying concepts. Such conditions are clearly inconsistent with the broader goals of education, which emphasize the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Therefore, innovation in instructional practices is essential. Educational approaches need to shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning environments, where students are given opportunities to actively participate in constructing knowledge and developing understanding through meaningful engagement (Usriadi et al., 2026).

Instructional strategies refer to the methods and approaches selected by teachers to deliver learning materials effectively. These strategies encompass the

characteristics of the content, the scope of learning activities, and the learning experiences provided to students (Dhamayanti, 2022). Among the various instructional approaches available, the inquiry learning strategy is considered particularly suitable for addressing the challenges described above. Inquiry learning encourages students to become actively involved in the learning process, enabling them to explore, investigate, and discover knowledge independently. Through inquiry-based activities, students are motivated to conduct experiments, ask questions, and engage in exploration, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of concepts through firsthand experiences (Maylia et al., 2024; Siregar & Yunitasari, 2018).

Inquiry learning offers numerous benefits within the educational process. This approach helps students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills while simultaneously increasing their curiosity and engagement during learning activities. Students become more motivated to learn because they are directly involved in investigating and discovering knowledge rather than merely receiving information from teachers. Nevertheless, inquiry learning also presents certain challenges and limitations that educators must carefully consider when implementing this strategy. Consequently, teachers need a comprehensive understanding of the concepts, principles, and procedures involved in inquiry-based instruction to ensure its successful application in the classroom (Lathiva Wulandaria & Cindy Aulia Safmib, 2026).

The concept of inquiry learning is grounded in the belief that curiosity is an innate human characteristic that emerges from early childhood. This natural curiosity serves as the foundation for lifelong learning. From an early age, individuals attempt to understand their surroundings through observation, listening, and sensory experiences. As they grow, they begin to question, investigate, analyze, and draw conclusions about the phenomena they encounter. Knowledge acquisition therefore becomes a process that involves exploration, reflection, and critical thinking. Inquiry learning capitalizes on this natural tendency by encouraging students to actively seek answers, examine evidence, and construct their own understanding of concepts and ideas (Yulia Dessani & Wandi, 2025).

By implementing inquiry-based learning strategies, students are encouraged to participate actively in the learning process. Such participation enhances both their motivation and overall academic achievement. Student-centered learning approaches not only promote intellectual growth but also contribute to the development of social skills, communication abilities, and collaborative competencies. Inquiry learning helps students gain a deeper understanding of subject matter while simultaneously fostering critical thinking skills that are essential for addressing future challenges in both academic and real-world contexts. As a result, inquiry-based instruction creates a dynamic, interactive, and meaningful learning environment that supports holistic student development (Rianto & Hanafi, 2025).

Ultimately, inquiry learning does more than increase student participation; it also cultivates essential twenty-first-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Because of its ability to facilitate meaningful and transformative learning experiences, inquiry learning can be

effectively applied across various educational levels. Through this approach, education becomes a process of continuously developing students' full potential rather than merely transmitting information. Inquiry learning thus serves as an effective strategy for preparing learners to become independent, reflective, and lifelong learners capable of adapting to an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world (Yulia Dessani & Wandi, 2025).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach through a comprehensive literature review of various sources, including academic books, scholarly journals, and relevant articles related to inquiry learning strategies. The literature review followed a systematic procedure commonly used in educational research. The first stage involved identifying the research questions, which focused on exploring the concept of inquiry learning and examining various challenges that may arise in its implementation, including those associated with the influence of social media within educational contexts.

The second stage consisted of conducting a literature search through academic databases and scholarly platforms such as Google Scholar and Knowledge Maps to obtain relevant and up-to-date sources. The search process utilized keywords including *inquiry learning*, *learning strategies*, *inquiry principles*, and *the role of teachers*. These keywords were selected to ensure the retrieval of literature closely aligned with the objectives of the study.

The third stage involved the selection and screening of literature. During this phase, the researcher identified and included only sources that directly addressed inquiry learning strategies. Articles and publications that were not relevant to the research focus or did not adequately discuss inquiry-based learning were excluded from the analysis to maintain the quality and relevance of the data.

The final stage consisted of analyzing and synthesizing the selected literature. The researcher critically examined the findings of the chosen scholarly works and interpreted them in relation to the objectives and title of the study. Through this process, key concepts, principles, implementation procedures, and the role of teachers in inquiry learning were identified and discussed comprehensively. The literature review method has become one of the most widely used approaches in educational research, particularly for evaluating the effectiveness of various instructional strategies and learning approaches.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Concept and Principles of Inquiry Learning Strategy

The term inquiry originates from the English word inquiry, which means questioning, investigation, examination, or systematic exploration. In the educational context, inquiry learning refers to a learning approach that emphasizes the process of investigating, questioning, analyzing, and discovering knowledge through active student engagement. Rather than receiving information passively, students are encouraged to explore concepts, identify problems, formulate hypotheses, gather evidence, and draw conclusions independently. This approach places critical and analytical thinking at the center of the learning process and promotes meaningful learning experiences through interaction between teachers and students (Dessani & Wandi, 2025).

Inquiry learning is widely recognized as a student-centered instructional strategy. According to Lahadisi (2014), inquiry learning enables students to develop their intellectual abilities through self-directed activities and systematic, logical, and critical thinking processes aimed at finding convincing solutions to problems. Similarly, Prasetiyo and Rosy (2021) explain that inquiry learning positions teachers as facilitators while encouraging students to actively participate in constructing their own understanding. Hidayatullah and Widhyastuti (2025) further emphasize that inquiry-based learning not only delivers academic content but also cultivates critical and analytical thinking skills by engaging students in exploration and investigation. Elniyeti (2017) describes inquiry learning as a series of learning activities designed to help students acquire knowledge and skills through their own learning experiences.

Based on these perspectives, inquiry learning can be understood as a learning strategy that requires students to function as active investigators in solving structured problems. Through questioning, exploration, observation, and discussion, learners construct knowledge independently while teachers guide and support the learning process. Consequently, inquiry learning encourages students to become more autonomous, reflective, and intellectually engaged in their educational experiences.

The primary objective of inquiry learning is to create a learning environment that provides students with broad opportunities to enhance their academic achievement through reflective thinking and intellectual development. According to Dessani and Wandi (2025), inquiry learning seeks to maximize students' intellectual potential by encouraging reflective thinking processes. Likewise, Prasetiyo and Rosy (2021) argue that inquiry learning promotes improved learning outcomes by helping students develop deeper understanding through reflective inquiry. Therefore, the ultimate goal of inquiry learning is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of intellectual capacities, critical thinking abilities, and self-awareness in learning.

Several key characteristics distinguish inquiry learning from other instructional approaches. First, it emphasizes students' active participation in searching for and discovering information, allowing them to become the primary agents of learning. Second, students are encouraged to seek answers to questions and problems independently, thereby fostering confidence and self-reliance. Third, teachers serve as facilitators who guide, motivate, and support students rather than merely transmitting information. Through these characteristics, inquiry learning aims to develop students' logical, critical, and systematic thinking skills while strengthening their intellectual capacities and problem-solving abilities (Lahadisi, 2014).

Inquiry learning can be classified into three main types. The first is guided inquiry, in which teachers provide substantial support by presenting initial questions, facilitating discussions, and helping students identify problems and develop strategies for solving them. This approach is particularly suitable for learners who are still developing their inquiry skills. The second is free inquiry, where students function similarly to scientists by independently identifying problems, designing procedures, collecting data, and drawing conclusions. The third

is modified free inquiry, which combines elements of guided and free inquiry. In this model, teachers provide the problem to be investigated, but students are given greater autonomy in determining procedures and solutions with minimal guidance (Dewi, 2016).

The successful implementation of inquiry learning is guided by several fundamental principles. The first principle is intellectual development. Inquiry learning prioritizes the enhancement of students' thinking abilities rather than merely focusing on content acquisition. Consequently, learning activities should provide opportunities for students to discover concepts independently through exploration and reasoning. The emphasis is placed on how students learn rather than solely on what they learn (Lahadisi, 2014).

The second principle is interaction. Learning is essentially a communicative process involving interactions among students, between students and teachers, and between students and their learning environment. Within inquiry learning, teachers are responsible for creating and managing a learning atmosphere that promotes meaningful dialogue and collaborative knowledge construction. Effective interaction allows students to exchange ideas, challenge assumptions, and deepen their understanding of concepts.

The third principle is questioning. Questions play a central role in inquiry learning because they stimulate curiosity and guide students' thinking processes. Teachers must possess strong questioning skills to encourage students to analyze situations, evaluate evidence, and formulate conclusions. Well-designed questions help students move beyond memorization and engage in higher-order thinking activities.

The fourth principle is learning to think. Inquiry learning views education as a process of developing thinking skills rather than simply accumulating information. Students are encouraged to utilize their cognitive capacities fully by analyzing information, evaluating evidence, solving problems, and generating new ideas. Through these activities, learning becomes a process of intellectual growth that engages multiple dimensions of cognition and reasoning.

The fifth principle is openness. Inquiry learning encourages students to explore multiple possibilities, formulate hypotheses, and test their assumptions through investigation. Students are given opportunities to experiment, make predictions, and verify their findings using logical reasoning and evidence. Learning becomes meaningful when learners are allowed to explore various alternatives and validate their conclusions independently. Therefore, teachers should create learning environments that support openness, curiosity, and intellectual exploration (Lahadisi, 2014).

In conclusion, inquiry learning is a student-centered instructional strategy that emphasizes investigation, critical thinking, and active participation in the learning process. Through guided exploration and systematic inquiry, students develop intellectual abilities, problem-solving skills, and reflective thinking. Supported by principles of intellectual development, interaction, questioning, learning to think, and openness, inquiry learning provides meaningful educational experiences that prepare students to become independent learners capable of addressing academic and real-life challenges effectively.

Steps of the Inquiry Learning Strategy

The inquiry learning strategy consists of several systematic stages, namely orientation, problem formulation, hypothesis formulation, data collection, hypothesis testing, and conclusion drawing. These stages are designed to guide students through a process of investigation and discovery, enabling them to construct knowledge independently while developing critical and analytical thinking skills.

The first stage is orientation. At this stage, the teacher creates a supportive learning environment and prepares students for the inquiry process. The teacher explains the topic, learning objectives, and expected learning outcomes. In addition, students are introduced to the inquiry procedures they will follow, including problem identification, hypothesis formulation, data collection, hypothesis testing, and conclusion drawing. Teachers also emphasize the significance of the topic and learning activities to motivate students and encourage active participation throughout the learning process. A well-conducted orientation stage helps students understand the purpose of learning and prepares them for deeper engagement in inquiry activities.

The second stage is problem formulation. In this stage, students are guided to identify and formulate a problem that will become the focus of their investigation. The problem should be challenging, meaningful, and capable of stimulating curiosity and critical thinking. Students are encouraged to explore possible solutions independently and view the problem as an opportunity for investigation and discovery. According to Ramadan and Gusmaneli (2025), the process of seeking solutions to meaningful problems is a fundamental component of inquiry learning because it provides valuable experiences that contribute to students' cognitive development.

The third stage is hypothesis formulation. A hypothesis is a tentative answer or prediction regarding the problem being investigated. At this stage, students use their prior knowledge, observations, and reasoning skills to propose possible explanations or solutions. Teachers can facilitate this process by asking guiding questions that encourage students to think critically and generate multiple hypotheses. Formulating hypotheses helps students develop analytical thinking skills and prepares them for the process of evidence-based investigation.

The fourth stage is data collection. This stage involves gathering relevant information and evidence needed to test the proposed hypotheses. Students may collect data through observation, experimentation, interviews, literature reviews, surveys, or other appropriate methods. Data collection is a crucial component of inquiry learning because it requires students to engage actively in the learning process while utilizing their intellectual abilities, perseverance, and curiosity. Through this activity, students learn how to obtain reliable information and use it to support their investigations.

The fifth stage is hypothesis testing. In this stage, students analyze the collected data and compare the evidence with their proposed hypotheses. The purpose is to determine whether the hypotheses are supported or rejected by the available evidence. Hypothesis testing encourages logical reasoning and critical evaluation of information. Students are required to base their conclusions on factual

evidence and rational arguments rather than assumptions or personal opinions. This process strengthens students' analytical skills and promotes evidence-based decision-making.

The sixth and final stage is drawing conclusions. At this stage, students summarize the results of their investigation based on the evidence obtained during hypothesis testing. They identify key findings, explain relationships among variables, and formulate conclusions that address the original problem. Teachers play an important role in guiding students to interpret data accurately and derive valid conclusions. According to Nurdyansyah and Fahyuni (2016), effective conclusion drawing requires students to connect evidence with reasoning in a clear and systematic manner.

These stages are grounded in the fundamental principles of inquiry learning, which emphasize active student participation, independent exploration, and critical thinking. Within this framework, teachers function primarily as facilitators, mentors, and motivators who support students throughout the inquiry process rather than simply transmitting information.

In the contemporary educational environment, technology also plays a significant role in supporting the implementation of inquiry learning. Various technological tools facilitate different aspects of the inquiry process, including data collection, information access, analysis, communication, and presentation of findings. Technologies such as projectors, computers, smartphones, digital learning platforms, and interactive applications enable teachers to deliver content in engaging and dynamic ways while providing students with opportunities to conduct research and present their discoveries effectively (Ramadan & Gusmaneli, 2025).

Overall, the inquiry learning process provides students with meaningful opportunities to investigate problems, construct knowledge, and develop higher-order thinking skills. Through the stages of orientation, problem formulation, hypothesis development, data collection, hypothesis testing, and conclusion drawing, students become active learners who are capable of critical inquiry, independent learning, and evidence-based reasoning.

The Role of Teachers in Inquiry Learning

The success of inquiry-based learning largely depends on the teacher's ability to manage and facilitate the learning process effectively. In inquiry learning, teachers are no longer the primary source of information; instead, they serve as facilitators who guide, motivate, and support students throughout the learning process. Rather than providing direct answers, teachers encourage students to think critically, explore alternative solutions, and independently construct their understanding of concepts. Rianto and Hanafi (2025) emphasize that effective implementation of inquiry learning requires teachers to possess strong classroom management skills and adequate professional competence. Their study found improvements in teachers' instructional performance from the "fairly good" category to the "good" category, highlighting the importance of continuous professional development and training in inquiry-based instruction.

One of the primary roles of teachers in inquiry learning is to focus instruction on meaningful and relevant problems that stimulate students' curiosity and

engagement. Learning activities should be designed around authentic issues that encourage students to investigate, analyze, and seek solutions independently. By presenting challenging problems, teachers create opportunities for students to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills while actively participating in the learning process (Dessani & Wandi, 2025).

Teachers are also responsible for providing the information and resources necessary to support students' investigations. However, this information should not eliminate the need for inquiry. Instead, it should encourage students to explore, question, and evaluate evidence independently. Teachers should build upon students' prior knowledge and introduce situations or examples that challenge existing assumptions. Such cognitive conflicts create intellectual tension that motivates students to investigate further, formulate hypotheses, and discover underlying principles or concepts. Through this process, learning becomes more meaningful because students actively construct knowledge rather than merely receiving information.

Another important responsibility of teachers is selecting appropriate methods for presenting learning materials. According to inquiry learning theory, instruction should progress through three representational stages: enactive, iconic, and symbolic. The enactive stage involves learning through direct experience and action; the iconic stage involves learning through images, diagrams, and visual representations; and the symbolic stage involves abstract concepts and language. Teachers must carefully align instructional methods with students' cognitive development levels, guiding learners progressively from concrete experiences to abstract understanding. This sequence helps ensure that learning activities are developmentally appropriate and effective.

During inquiry activities, teachers function as mentors or tutors who provide guidance when necessary. Rather than explaining concepts and principles in advance, teachers allow students to explore and discover knowledge independently. Guidance is provided only when students encounter difficulties that hinder their progress. Effective teachers offer timely feedback that supports learning while encouraging students to become increasingly self-directed. The ultimate goal is to help learners develop the confidence and skills needed to investigate problems independently and regulate their own learning processes.

Assessment also represents a significant responsibility for teachers in inquiry learning. Evaluating inquiry-based learning can be challenging because students may pursue different learning paths and achieve diverse outcomes. Therefore, assessment should focus not only on the final answer but also on students' understanding of concepts, investigative processes, critical-thinking abilities, and problem-solving skills. Teachers can use various assessment methods, including multiple-choice tests, essay examinations, project reports, presentations, and performance-based assessments, to evaluate students' mastery of key principles and their ability to apply knowledge in different contexts (Dessani & Wandi, 2025).

Based on these perspectives, it can be concluded that the teacher's role in inquiry learning extends far beyond delivering information. Teachers create supportive learning environments, facilitate investigations, guide students' thinking processes, provide appropriate feedback, and assess both learning outcomes and

learning processes. Through these responsibilities, teachers help students become independent learners who can think critically, solve problems effectively, and construct knowledge through inquiry and exploration.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Inquiry Learning

Inquiry learning offers several significant advantages. First, it promotes the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains simultaneously, thereby creating meaningful and holistic learning experiences. Second, it allows students to learn according to their individual abilities, interests, and learning styles, making instruction more personalized and student-centered. Third, inquiry learning aligns well with contemporary educational philosophies that view learning as an active process of knowledge construction and personal transformation. Through inquiry activities, students develop critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, collaboration abilities, and problem-solving competencies that are essential for lifelong learning (Prasetiyo & Rosy, 2021).

Despite its benefits, inquiry learning also presents several challenges. One limitation is that successful implementation requires students to possess a certain level of readiness and intellectual independence. Students who are accustomed to passive learning may initially struggle with the demands of inquiry-based activities. In addition, inquiry learning can be difficult to implement in large classrooms because teachers must provide guidance and support to many students simultaneously. Differences in students' critical-thinking abilities may also affect the effectiveness of the strategy. Furthermore, inquiry learning demands considerable preparation, flexibility, and active involvement from teachers, making it more complex than traditional teacher-centered approaches (Prasetiyo & Rosy, 2021).

In conclusion, inquiry learning is a powerful instructional strategy that encourages active student participation, critical thinking, and independent knowledge construction. Its success depends heavily on the teacher's ability to create a supportive learning environment, facilitate meaningful investigations, provide appropriate guidance, and conduct comprehensive assessments. Although the strategy presents certain challenges, its potential to develop intellectual, social, and personal competencies makes it a valuable approach for contemporary education.

CONCLUSION

Inquiry learning is a student-centered instructional approach that emphasizes critical and analytical thinking to enable learners to investigate problems, discover information, and develop solutions independently. This approach is rooted in constructivist theory, which asserts that knowledge is not acquired merely through memorizing information but is constructed through direct experience, exploration, and active engagement in the learning process. Several fundamental principles guide the implementation of inquiry learning, including intellectual development, interaction, questioning, learning to think, and openness. These principles encourage students to become active participants in knowledge construction while fostering higher-order thinking skills and independent learning.

Through the stages of inquiry learning, students are provided with opportunities to enhance their critical-thinking abilities, formulate questions,

investigate problems, and discover solutions independently. As a result, they become more capable of self-directed learning, connecting new information with prior knowledge, and expanding their understanding through reflection and analysis. Inquiry-based learning also increases students' motivation, engagement, and participation in classroom activities. Learning outcomes tend to be more meaningful when students are actively involved in solving problems and constructing their own understanding. Although the learning process is centered on students, teachers continue to play an essential role by providing guidance, facilitating investigations, and creating supportive learning environments that encourage inquiry and exploration. Consequently, the focus of instruction shifts from teacher-centered knowledge transmission to student-centered knowledge construction and discovery.

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