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## Inquiry Approach to Learning Can Be Applied in Christian Education Classroom

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**Abstract**

Inquiry approach to learning is one of the result of the paradigm shifts in education which had started in the early 1980. In spite of the benefits of the inquiry approach to learning, many teachers/educators who apply teacher-centered learning are reluctant to apply it in their classrooms. They prefer to teaching using the lecturing method instead. The inquiry approach to learning is more beneficial to students than the lecturing method. Formerly the inquiry approach was only applied in natural science classes, but later on and up to now. It has been used in social science classes as well. Religion is classified as a branch of social studies, thus the inquiry approach to learning can also be used in Christian Education classes. Based on the argument in this articles, the writer aim to show that applying the inquiry approach to learning in the Christian education classroom will give benefits to students as their performances will be improved and most of all. They will change from passive disinterested learners to active self motivated and self directed learners. As a result, the students will have deeper understanding about anything to discussed.

**Keywords:** inquiry approach to learning, paradigm shifts, religion classification

**INTRODUCTION**

Inquiry is an approach to learning that engages learners's natural curiosity and desire to make senses of the worlds. It encourages to asking of question and the seeking of answers to thoses questions. Through investigation and exploration (Iskandar, 2022). Inquiry based on learning can be applied in any classroom as well as at any grade. Formerly, this inquiry based on learning was monthly utilized only in natural science classes, but later on this approach has been also utilized in social science classes. It can be said that inquiry approach to learning is one of the result of the paradigm shifts in education. The paradigm shifts in education had started since the early 1980. A paradigm shifts in education is the various changes disinterested learners to active self motivated and self directed learners (Farrel, 2023).

The concept of paradigm shift comes mainly from the work of Thomas Kuhn in the content of revolutions in natural science. This concept is now used more widely to describe fundamental changes that occur in any domain , discipline or field (Blessinger et, all 2018). The position effects of the inquiry-based learning on students's performances are many. Some institutions are as the following: encourages, critical thinking, improves problem-solving skills, encourages creativity, improves common miscommunication skills, connect learning to the reak world, encoourages engaged learning (Scholl, 2023).

However, there are some negative sides of the inquiry approach. According to the teachers/educators who used teacher centered learning. This approach is time consuming total contents can not be covered in stipulated time. Teaches/educators have to be trained well to apply into the lack of allied teaching also creates problem for inquiry based approach (Crockett, 2023). The disadvantages of inquiry based learning make teacher/ educators are reluctant to change their tradisional way of teaching that is lecturing. Their lecturing method is the oldest method of teaching in the history of education. It can be thread way back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and yet it is still popular until now. Based on this fact, it can be concluded

that the educational paradigm shift has not been implemented as widely as it might have been (Farrel, 2023).

Epistemologically, the subject of religion is classified as a branch of social sciences. Therefore the inquiry based learning can also be applied in Christian Education classroom to initiate the paradigm shift in Christian Education to begin. The writers of this articles have on objective in writing about the inquiry based learning is ti argue that the previously mentioned approach will be beneficially to the students. For examples they will be critical in thinking their problem solving skills will be improved, their communication skills will be improved They will be able to connect learning to the real world, And meet of all, they will change from passive disinterested learners to actives self motivated and self directed learners. As a corelarry, the studests wll have deeper understanding about anything discussed. William Wiersma stated that "Theory is a generalization or a collection of generalizations that can be used to systematically explain various phenomena" (Thomas, 2016). Cooper and Schindler, (2014), argued that theory is a set of concepts, definitions and propositions that are systematically arranged so that they can be used to explain and predict phenomena. According to Rumbewas, (2019) in Sumardi Subrata stated "that after the research problem is formulated, the second step in the research process is to look for theories, concepts and generalizations of research results that can be used as a theoretical basis for conducting research.

So from the opinion of the figures above, the researcher concludes that theory is a second stage in making scientific works so that they can determine the concept or basis in making scientific works and so that they can be arranged systematically and assist researchers in conducting research. God created humans with different shapes and sizes. different, with different skin colors, and has its own advantages and disadvantages. Humans have a variety of different attitudes and personalities, so they need an effort to shape themselves. According to Harvard psychologists and Robert Coles in a book entitled Building a Moral Personality, A Theological Approach to Character in Christian Education by Sidjabat, (2021), that "from an early age children have shown their moral intelligence. According to Virginia Satir, family is a factory for processing personality, values and character. The values instilled by the family in the child are *first*, the family forms the child's self-concept (self-worth) to be positive or negative, good or bad or healthy or suffers from feelings of inferiority. *Second*, the family teaches children how to communicate, both being closed and open, rude or polite. *Third*, the family instills discipline in children through the application of rules, which will later shape children to be rigid or flexible in responding to rules and norms. Fourth, the family also educates children to be able to play a social role to grow up to be both timid and brave (Sidjabat, 2021).

According to psychologists, the first formation of a child is his family. When a child gets an experience of love from his parents, a child will feel that he is very loved, a child will follow the treatment of his parents and vice versa if a child gets an experience with his family in bad things such as stealing, disrespecting others , then the child will also be able to follow as his parents did (Thompson, 1989). According to Dolores Lackey, the Christian family is a place of holy shelter, which means a place of acceptance, formation and growth that

empowers family members to participate in God's ongoing act of love and salvation (Conn, 2007).

According to BS Sijabat in his book entitled personal development, the formation of a Christian Education is the formation of a person's character or moral personality. Character means the nature, character, or habit in oneself and in life that is deeply ingrained and ingrained and has become a characteristic of a person. What others can see as being responsible, diligent, clean, organized, polite, friendly, patient, tenacious, and hard working. Character is closely related to faith in believing in Jesus Christ. Some researcher confirm that a superior personality is an attitude of someone whose desire is always to do good, to carry out all his responsibilities sincerely without any grumbling, to respect others, both opinions and ideas conveyed and there is good cooperation (Murphy, 1982; Cowley, 2021). In a Christian education perspective, the term Faith (faith) can be interpreted as a response to the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Faith in God is related to things that are communicated or revealed in writing in the Bible. When someone has faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will automatically demand better. So that the presence of Christ in one's life makes a difference. The presence of Jesus through His spirit in life, makes a person a new creation and continuously experiences renewal (Garcia, 2011).

### **METHOD**

The research approach used in this research is quantitative inquiry research based on learning. Then the theory can be adapted to the existing subject matter for the benefit of the teaching and learning process in class. This inquiry approach learning is expected to be able be applied in improving the quality of Christian education, as well as being able to establish partnerships between researchers and teachers in solving problems found in the classroom. Data collection techniques were carried out for each activity according to the instructions for carrying out Suyanto's class action research (Winarno, 1994).

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The basic philosophy of the inquiry based learning is the constructivism theory. In their article, Kirschner et al., (2006) mentioned some outstanding educators/educational psychologist who contributed to the development of the constructivism theory such as Peaget, Dewey, Vigosky and Fiere. According to MacLeod, (2023) there are several aspects of the constructivism theory. In terms of learning theory, it highlights the active role of learners in building their own understanding. The reflect on their experiences create mental representation and incorporate new knowledge into their schemes. This process promotes deeper understanding. Therefore, it can be concluded that according to the constructivism theory, knowledge is constructed rather than absorbed. In terms of an approach to learning, it holds that learners actively construct or make their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learners. Another aspect of the constructivism teaching philosophy is that it support a variety of students centered teaching methods and techniques which contrast to tradisional education by which knowledge is simply transmitted by

teachers/educators to learners. In the history of education as the emergencies of new theories followed by research to prove them, resulting in the paradigm shift in educational.

The idea of paradigm shift first began in the philosophy of sciences. Thomas Kuhn a twentieth century physicist and philosopher of science used the term paradigm shift in his book: “the structure of scientific revolution”, since then this phrase which means a revolutionary and dramatic change in assumptions spread to social sciences (Nye, 2023). Professionals in many different fields applied, Thomas Kuhn’s idea of fundamental in the sciences in their own disciplines shortly after in the field of education. This shift is usually known as the move from teacher centered instruction to the learner centered or learning centered instruction (Farrel, 2023).

### Structuring the Inquiry Based Learning

The following is the definition of inquiry based learning according to Bauld, (2022). As approach to traditional classroom learning where a teacher presents facts and knowledge about a subject, inquiry based learning is an educational strategy in which students follow methods and practices similar to those of professional scientist to construct knowledge. Inquiry based learning is not just for natural science also but for social sciences.

In a traditional classroom the teacher presents the learning concepts to the students teacher learn different concept beforehand and explain the concept in the classroom. The teacher will be actively involved in the lecture and the students will be passively listening to the lectures. On the contrary inquiry learning classroom teachers train students by asking questions so that they are able to do research and to find answers thus the inquiry based learning is obtaining knowledge and skills. Through the process of asking a question and investigating.

Furthermore, inquiry approach is often depicted as a linear process as the scientific method with a certain pre-planned set of steps. In actual fact, it is not a linear progression very often it is more a repeating or cyclical series of events which are affected by observation and discoveries. The following diagram provides the outlines of stages which make up the inquiry process.



Inquiry Process flow Chart (2019 Let’s Talk Sciences)

### **Steps in Extending the inquiry in Social Studies**

Jones & Fowler (2017) had provided the steps in doing inquiry in the social studies classroom. They are as the following, 1. Select a guiding question for the inquiry. Make sure it's sticky question. Sticky question means hard to deal with that require great physical or mental effort to accomplish. 2. Teach your students to ask question. The art and science of asking question is the science of all knowledge.

3. Provide inquiry connection for your students to summarize and categorize their data along the way.

Providing students with supporting questions and opportunities to process their learning, reaffirm their statement or redirect their inquiry are critical opportunities for clarification during the inquiry process. 4. Provide a framework for students to communicate their findings through a relevant action or product that validates the inquiry. Inquiry outcomes can take many forms such as multi-media projects, repository writing, projects or some real life opportunity to take informed action on an issue a topic. 5. Support students in action reflection during and after their inquiry learning process. This is an important stage in a history class is to help students establish significance by using evidences, finding patterns and analyzing perspectives. A historical inquiry is a process where students ask questions?. Analyze past events and think about bigger pictures. According to some social science educators, inquiry is the shift from studying to doing social studies. Inquiry learning in a history class provides the opportunity for students to put themselves in the shoes of historians to obtain knowledge and deeper their understanding of the past and the world today. Scholl, (2023) provided the five steps to do the inquiry based learning in a history class as following:

1. The five "W" question the source. Who created it?  
When and where was it created?  
What is the source about?  
Why was the source created?
2. Context  
Situating the source in space and times, placing it in the wide picture of history. What else was happening at that time?
3. Exploring  
Examine the details of the source. What is it about?. What words, images or symbols are needed? What was its purpose?
4. Reaching Conclusion  
Use context, evidence and observations to develop conclusions. What can the source reveal?
5. Finding Proof

Compare your conclusions with after primary and secondary sources to corroborate your findings. Do other sources confirm challenge your conclusions.

## **Steps in Implementing the Inquiry Based Learning in Christian Education Classrooms using the topic of Nehemiah's Leadership**

### **The Story of Nehemiah**

This Nehemiah story is summarized from the compilation of [Schulz, \(2023\)](#) books. Nehemiah was a Hebrew living in Persia, where he worked and served King Artaxerxes I as a cup bearer in the year 444 B.C. He got a bad report from his brother telling that the wall of Jerusalem and God's temple was in terrible condition. After hearing this bad news, he wanted to go Jerusalem and rebuild the appalling broken wall. He considered this condition as a call from God.

He spent along time in prayer from the heart with fasting. He promised and glorified God. He confessed sins of the peoples. He trusted God's promises to Moses that God would restore the peoples. The Persian king observed and saw that Nehemiah looked serious and sad, that was why the king asked what was the matter. Nehemiah said a quick prayer before reaping. The king allowed him to go Jerusalem. Nehemiah led the people to work together and they completed the work of rebuilding Jerusalem wall in 52 days. Nehemiah kept praying while working. This shows Nehemiah's obedience to God and deep heart relationship with God.

Nehemiah's patience and hopefulness shown when he prayed for four months before God answered his prayer. Once he arrived in Jerusalem, he took time to motivate the people to trust God. He reminded the people that God would help and fight for them. He reminded the people about Isaiah 40:31 that those who waited for the Lord would renew their strength. Nehemiah trusted God would deal with the enemy, that was why Nehemiah never tried to attack them. He acknowledged God's blessing and shared it with the people to give them hope. Nehemiah was a wise person the king allowed him to go Jerusalem and supplied him all his necessities he needed. Especially letters signed by the king to get any conveniences he needed during his journey. God had put a plan in Nehemiah's mind. Nehemiah did not carry out God's plan hastily, instead he waited for three days when he arrived in Jerusalem. He secretly inspected the situation and the damage at night. God's plan included teamwork, persistence and cooperation plus trust in God. Nehemiah listened to God's guidance.

Nehemiah was a great leader who inspired workers. He spoke to all the people and inspired them to work. He was also prayerfully prepared when outside opposition began. As a great leader Nehemiah was also a servant and understood the people he leads. The enemies of the Hebrews lived around the city and did not want the wall rebuilt. Nehemiah prayed each time the enemies intimidated them, He declared God would fight for them. The people prayed and set up guards when the enemies terrorized to attack. Nehemiah ceaselessly reminded the people to trust God and paired the workers to work while the other stood by, armed to fight. No obstruction stopped him because of God's guidance.

Nehemiah was famous as a man of integrity because he stayed connected to God. He always obeyed and trusted God. It was written that he showed respect to the king of Persia and was prepared to die for the king as his job was a cup bearer, meaning that he had to taste each drink to be sure it contained no poison. He kept his promises to return to the king Artaxerxes

and them return to Jerusalem. He got the people together and rebuked them because he heard that they are fighting with each other. He said that because the people did not fear God and took advantages of their own people.

He was successful in settling the issues as the people responded positively and praised God. After the wall was completely rebuilt, Nehemiah worked with Ezra the priest to reconnect the people with God. All over the Nehemiah story, his prayer life shown a man of totally trusted God. When they completed the wall, Nehemiah declared that the surrounding nations admitted that God had helped them. He understood the consequences of both holiness and wholeness.

### **CONCLUSION**

For this article's conclusion learning purpose of the inquiry approach of Nehemiah story are;

1. To help learners/students understand the characteristic of Nehemiah's as a human being and a leader.
2. To help learners and students to contemplate about Nehemiah's prayer life.
3. Learning Scenario, by adopting and modifying the framework of School, the Nehemiah inquiry based learning looks like following; Step 1. Questioning. Questions are the soul on which the inquiry process moves along. Thus it is important for educators to teach the learners/students to ask questions, after providing them with learning material, that is the Nehemiah story. The question which may emerge after brainstorming are; a. what is the story of Nehemiah and the wall in the bible, b. who was Nehemiah?, c. why did Nehemiah important in the bible?, d. what did Nehemiah build a wall?, e. what was Nehemiah's job?, f. what was the focus of Nehemiah? g. why was Nehemiah chosen by God to become a leader? h. what facts, did you find about Nehemiah leadership? Step 2. Contextualizing. Advise the students/learners to situate the story of Nehemiah in space and time, placing it in wider picture of history, using the question; what else was happening at that time? Step 3 Exploring. Advise the students to examine the details of Nehemiah story, using the questions; a. what was the name of the Persian king at that time? b. what position did Nehemiah get from the king? c. was the position crucial? why?, d. what happened to the wall of Jerusalem, e. why did Nehemiah obtain permission from the king to go to Palestine?, g. what provision did Nehemiah get from the king?, h. how long did Jews succeed in rebuilding Jerusalem's wall under Nehemiah's direction?, i. what are the secret of Nehemiah's success?, j. can you mention Nehemiah's leadership, k. are your findings about his leadership based on reliable evidences? Step 4 Reaching Conclusions. Advise the students/learners to use contact, evidence, and observations to draw/develop conclusions. What can the story of Nehemiah come out with? Step 5 Finding Proof. Advise the students/learners to compare their conclusion with other primary or secondary sources to validate their findings. Do other sources confirm or challenge their conclusions? Step 6 Active Contemplation. Assist the students/learners to do active contemplation during and after their inquiry learning process. This is a principal phase for the students to think about the process of inquiry and how to improve their approach or build skills for future opportunities. The students/learners may be advised to imitate Nehemiah's leadership qualities.



## BIODATA



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