

Social Inquiry Teaching Model

Description

Process

Purpose

Context

Examples

Description

A model that engages exploration and reflection about authentic social problems, controversies, or dilemmas, and which guides students through stages of inquiry, research/evidence-gathering, analysis and reflection for the purpose of resolving, solving, taking a position on the social issue, or drawing conclusions about hypotheses related to the social issue. (This is a rough summary)

The teacher generally is the initiator of inquiry and guides it from phase to phase in order to explore or solve a problem. 1

A model that guides students in examining their assumptions, beliefs; in evaluating their biases, prejudices, or attitudes “through self-reflection and critical debate” to identify how they influence “perceptions of others and their understanding of the world.” 7

Might be thought of as the “social science inquiry model” or “critical inquiry/reconstruction model” in the teaching of social studies, but some authors are more rigorous in their definitions and meanings. 9

Note: In one study, students ranked “inquiry” and “cooperative learning” as one of the top “preferred” instructional models. “Social inquiry” includes these models, but with the focus on the social dimensions. 5

Process

One view of the model’s phases: (1) exploration of social issues; (2) commitment to civic improvement; (3) respect for dignity; (4) social action. 1

Models phases include: (1) Orientation - sensitization to a dilemma or problem, development of a general statement of the problem as a starting point for inquiry; (2) Hypothesis – some hypothesis(es) to guide inquiry and that can be tested; (3) Definition – clarifying and defining terms in hypothesis(es); (4) Exploration – examine logical validity and internal consistency of hypothesis(es); (5) Evidencing – gather and reconcile facts related to the hypothesis(es); (6) Generalizations – solutions, conclusions, or statements about the problem. 1

Adaptation of phases in fashion and consumerism teaching: (1) briefing on the assessment team about interests being served and assumptions about society; (2) conducting intragroup reflections to discuss finding of the investigation and draw conclusions with critical reflections on issues such as inclusion/exclusion of certain groups, impact of articles/color plates/ads, who stands to benefit; (3) evaluate inter-group assessment to summarize peer questioning and evaluation, new perspectives; (4) collecting data for evaluation from students’ reflective reports and classroom observations. 7

An adaptation called “jurisprudential inquiry” has these six phases: (1) orientation to the case; (2) identifying the issues; (3) taking a position; (4) exploring the stance underlying the position taken, (5) refining and qualifying the position; (6) testing assumptions about facts, definitions, and consequences. These phases actually were applied in “sport studies” and also called “experiential learning” with a focus on social dimensions. 2, 8

Adaptation in social consciousness-raising: (1) stories that hold our society together, (2) vision of an evolved society with what we value most, (3) design of practices, institutions, and technologies that could embody this vision, (4) change process – stories and strategies about how societies change to build a better civilization, (5) contributions we can make to social transformations, to the larger purposes of our lives. 10

Another way of describing the phases: (1) dilemma or inquiry; (2) invention or construction; (3) feedback; (4) generalization – in the context of this premise: “One should not attempt to teach knowledge from any academic area without teaching the social process by which it was negotiated.” Herbert Thelen 6

Purpose

Teaches about society. 6

Engages values clarification “not just social facts.” 9

Develops “capacity to inquire into and reflect on the nature of social life.” 1

Encourages students to question social and political forces. 7

Develops “self-awareness and responsibility.” 4

Involves inquiry and creative construction to explore social issues. 1

Requires critical reflection – “becoming aware of why we perceive, think, feel or act as we do’ Mezirow (1991) 7

Develops reflection on “significant social problems.” 1

Promotes critical reflective thinking skills. 7

Requires authentic, genuine controversy or dilemmas or puzzles with which to grapple or generate hypotheses. 1

Engages deductive reasoning. 1

Based on social interaction. 3

Provides students opportunities to communicate effectively, negotiate differences, explore view points, reflect on biases and the effects of biases. 8

Contexts

Sport studies 8

Teaching fashion and consumerism 7

Teaching social studies 9

Raising social consciousness 10

Examples

In fashion and consumerism: providing opportunities for discourse, dialogue, questioning, challenging viewpoints, and sharing of similar experiences; writing an intra-group reflective paper with inter-group peer evaluation. 7

Sport studies: “Rugby in the media” and “Heart running” (links are available at the web site) 8

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