

The evolution of inquiry

The Year 9 experience at Oakham School

Controlled: Why read 'The Little Prince'?

FOSIL Inquiry Skills Project

Characteristics:

- Many skills practised to build a foundation for more advanced inquiries;
- Topic chosen by the teacher;
- Outcome secondary to learning how to conduct an inquiry, including layout and composition of an academic piece of work.

Objective:

"to deal with the evidence presented and to apply logic and reason to address problems based on the information provided" (Callison, 2015, p14).

Guided: To what extent did your campaigner do something extraordinary to improve a human right? & How can the health or current status of a plant be communicated using technology?

Citizenship & Computer Science

Characteristics:

- General framework with individuals working on subtopics;
- Planning and reflection phases within the inquiry;
- Final outcomes expected to be similar in length and content.

Objective:

"student gains new understanding, shares their findings and applies new learning while immersed in a topic that is significant and meaningful" (Kuhlthau in Callison, 2015, p19).

Modelled: FOSIL project on a topic of student's own choice

Characteristics:

- Process modelled by teacher and student provided with scaffolded practice in performing inquiry skills;
- Student mentored in controlling bias; determining best information; justifying information choices; rethinking topics, hypotheses, questions based on new information.

Objective:

Through modelling and scaffolding, students are allowed to "meaningfully participate in and gain skill at a task that they would be unable to complete unaided" (Belland in Callison, 2015, p23).

Free: The final objective

Characteristics:

Student has ownership of the process from question formulation to mode of presentation.

Objective:

Preparation for lifelong learning in the digital information age. Not reached by most students during their school careers (Callison, 2015, p28) but a small number of our students come close with their Individual Projects.

And why do we do what we do how we do it?

"When applied with meaningful scaffolding for students to move upward toward the goal of insight, beyond just factual knowledge, the most powerful learning experience is when students begin to recognize that there are inquiry processes that can take them to higher order learning, and they begin to fashion tangible behaviours that will get them to that level. They realize they can think and do so critically and frequently" (Callison, 2015, p29).

Images taken, and in some cases adapted from, Britannica Image Quest, <https://quest.eb.com/>

Callison, D. (2015). *The evolution of inquiry : controlled, guided, modelled and free*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited.

"The world belongs to me because I understand it."

- Honoré de Balzac in the words of Saul Bellow