
Developing Upper Primary Students’ 21st Century Skills provides the rationale for implementing enquiry PjBL (Project Based Learning) into the upper primary classroom, as well as offering suggestions for how enquiry PjBL can be introduced successfully. The constructivist approach is advocated as important in developing 21st century skills through PjBL, and scaffolding is seen as a key component of effective learning using this approach. Research evidence is provided from reputable promoters of enquiry learning such as Kuhlthau, as well as the personal research of the authors, to support the benefits of enquiry PjBL (in contrast to the more traditional teaching methods of the past where the teacher provides the information and students regurgitate the information provided).

Skills for the 21st century are identified using three skill sets (learning and innovation, digital literacies, and life and career skills). Within these skill sets 12 components have been identified (e.g., critical thinking and problem solving, information literacy, flexibility and adaptability). Guides and suggestions for the first and second years of intervention are offered, with the aim of covering the three skills sets and the 12 associated components through carefully designed, scaffolded activities that enable successful progression for each student over the two-year programme. Web 2.0 technologies, in particular wikis, are discussed as effective tools to promote collaborative activities, with students participating in tasks they may not be able to complete on their own, and providing the opportunity for peer evaluation. It is recommended that teachers evaluate students’ learning processes (rather than focusing on the final product), providing feedback at relevant points, thereby facilitating constructivist learning.

Although this book provides a thought-provoking read for those interested in furthering their understanding of inquiry PjBL, the content is strongly focused on students attending school in Hong Kong and the curriculum in place there. This limits the benefit of the suggestions provided by the authors for teachers working in a different system. However, the notion of engaging students in learning ‘how to learn’ and in developing skills for the 21st century can, and should, be applied to any classroom; and Developing Upper Primary Students’ 21st Century Skills certainly provides research evidence and ideas that encourage the reader to consider implementing enquiry PjBL.

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