Inquiry-based Leading and Learning. Inquiry-based working by School Boards, School Leaders and Teachers and Students’ Inquiry Habit of Mind

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Inquiry-based leading and learning

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Summary

Inquiry-based working is assumed to contribute to improving educational quality (Krüger 2010a) and to stimulate professional learning (Katz & Dack, 2014). It involves having an inquiry habit of mind, being data literate and creating a culture of inquiry in schools (based on Earl & Katz, 2006). The general aim of this study was to provide insight in the way school boards, school leaders and teachers work in an inquiry-based manner, how an inquiry-based culture is established in schools and what this means for the inquiry habit of mind of students. A students’ inquiry habit of mind includes being curious and having critical thinking skills.

We used a quantitative survey to investigate the relationship between the psychological factors attitude, experienced social pressure, self-efficacy and collective efficacy, and school leaders’ and teachers’ inquiry-based working. For school leaders a relationship was found between self-efficacy regarding inquiry-based leadership and all aspects of inquiry-based leadership. Attitude towards inquiry-based leadership was significantly related to creating a culture of inquiry. For teachers the results show a relationship between self-efficacy and all aspects of inquiry-based working. In addition, collective efficacy, attitude, and experienced social pressure are all related to aspects of inquiry-based working.

In addition, we performed a case study at 3 schools to investigate the mutual influence between school boards, school leaders, and teachers regarding inquiry-based working. This study identified multiple ways in which educators can encourage others to work in an inquiry-based manner. These approaches are not only top-down from school board to school leader, and from school leader to teacher, but also bottom-up: teachers can encourage school leaders, and school leaders can encourage school boards to work in an inquiry-based manner.

To examine the relationship between teachers’ inquiry-based work and students’ inquiry habit of mind we combined the results from our survey and our case study. The survey data revealed a relationship between teachers’ inquiry-based work and students’ curiosity. However, no relationship was found between teachers’ inquiry-based approach and students’ critical thinking habits. The case study results illustrate how teachers’ inquiry-based work can be related to students’ curiosity and critical thinking habits.