

COLLABORATIVE INSIGHTS INTO IMPROVING INQUIRY-BASED SCIENCE TEACHING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FILIPINO TEACHERS AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

Garcia, Genalyn M.¹, Manalo, Jelichel P.², Caballes, Dennis G.³

^{1,2}Graduate Student, Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines

³Professor, Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines

*Correspondence Tel: +1 912-210-3576

Email: garcia2445041@ceu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT: *This study examines the perceptions, challenges, and strategies of Filipino teachers in the Philippines, Filipino teachers in the U.S., and international teachers in the U.S. regarding the implementation of inquiry-based learning (IBL) in science education. Findings reveal that Filipino teachers in the U.S. demonstrate the highest favorability toward IBL's impact on student engagement and learning outcomes (61.5% rated it very effective), leveraging their dual educational experiences. DepEd teachers (54.5% very effective) emphasize IBL's value despite barriers such as limited resources and curriculum constraints. U.S. international teachers exhibit more varied perceptions, with 22.2% rating IBL very effective, reflecting the complexities of diverse classrooms. Key benefits of IBL include increased student engagement (75%) and critical thinking (60%), while challenges include unequal student participation (90%) and time constraints (75%). Professional development priorities include student-led investigations, interdisciplinary teaching, and building inquiry-rich classrooms. Recommendations highlight the need for tailored training, resource accessibility, and adaptive strategies to support IBL across diverse contexts.*

Keywords: Inquiry-Based Learning, Filipino Teachers, Professional Development, Student Engagement, Cultural Responsiveness

1. INTRODUCTION

The inquiry-based approach in science teaching holds great potential for engaging students in active learning, fostering critical thinking, and enhancing problem-solving skills—key attributes of 21st-century education [1]. However, the effectiveness of inquiry-based teaching can vary significantly depending on context. Danipog [2] notes that while practices like questioning and communication were more readily implemented, teachers found more complex inquiry practices, such as designing investigations and analyzing data, challenging. This observation aligns with findings by Gutierrez [3], who identified barriers to implementing inquiry-based teaching in the Philippines, including insufficient support, limited access to inquiry materials, and the time-intensive nature of inquiry methods. Moreover, a meta-analysis by Antonio and Prudente [4] demonstrates that inquiry-based approaches significantly improve students' higher-order thinking skills across various scientific disciplines, making a compelling case for the approach's value in science education globally. Their findings further emphasize the need for adaptable strategies to maximize inquiry's potential in different educational contexts. This comparative research study will explore how Filipino teachers in the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines, Filipino teachers in the U.S., and international teachers from Jamaica and India apply inquiry-based teaching strategies, shedding light on the varied implementations and challenges faced across these contexts. Research shows that inquiry-based teaching is an effective strategy for boosting student motivation and achieving positive science education outcomes. However, implementing inquiry-based methods poses challenges, especially in diverse settings where factors like limited resources, time constraints, and varying instructional practices can impede effectiveness. In particular, beginning science teachers may struggle with adapting to

inquiry-based approaches due to limited teaching experience and insufficient training [6]. Addressing these barriers is crucial for maximizing inquiry-based learning's impact on academic achievement. In the Philippines, for instance, DepEd has issued several orders promoting inquiry-based learning. DepEd Order No. 21 [5] highlights student-centered pedagogies and activity-based experiences to develop critical thinking skills in the K-12 curriculum. However, teachers still face systemic barriers, including inadequate resources, large class sizes, and a curriculum that does not fully support inquiry-based approaches [7]. Similarly, international movements and educational standards, such as the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), advocate for student-centered, hands-on teaching methods in the U.S., yet teachers encounter challenges related to resource availability and varying levels of support within different school districts [8, 9, 10].

A considerable body of research has investigated various factors influencing educational outcomes, including teaching pedagogies [11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16], student preferences and preparedness [17, 18], student motivation and attitudes [19, 20, 21, 22], instructors' competencies, skills, and challenges [23, 24, 25], assessment methodologies and instruments [26, 27, 28, 29], and other related variables [30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36]. While these studies have focused on enhancing student learning outcomes, there is a notable gap in research regarding the exploration of science teaching utilizing IBL, hence, this study.

This study aims to identify the barriers teachers face in implementing IBL and to evaluate the support needed through professional development programs in the educational systems of both the Philippines and Georgia. Specifically, the research seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Filipino teachers in DepEd regarding the effectiveness of inquiry-based science teaching in relation to student engagement and learning outcomes?
2. How do teachers perceive the impact of inquiry-based learning (IBL) on student motivation and outcomes in their classrooms? Specifically, what are the best and least observable outcomes teachers have experienced from implementing IBL?
3. How does IBL influence student motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes, and how do these effects vary across different educational contexts? What challenges do teachers encounter when implementing inquiry-based learning (IBL) in their educational contexts?
4. Following these challenges, what strategies have teachers found effective in overcoming them to successfully integrate IBL in their classrooms? What professional development opportunities do teachers believe are necessary to competently implement inquiry-based science teaching in their classrooms?
5. How can inquiry-based learning (IBL) practices from teachers' current educational systems be adapted to improve teaching in their previous educational systems, and what specific practices from their previous systems can enhance their current educational practices?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS Participants

In total, 32 respondents participated in the study, composed of 11 Filipino teachers from DepEd, 13 Filipino teachers in the U.S., and 8 international teachers.

Filipino Teachers in DepEd - Philippines: This group consisted of high school science teachers from grades 7-12, working within the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd). Teachers were selected from various schools to capture a range of responses concerning teaching practices and contexts.

Filipino Teachers in the U.S.: This group included Filipino educators who had transitioned to teaching middle and high school in the U.S. after initially gaining experience within the Philippine educational system.

International Teachers in the U.S.: This group comprised science teachers from various countries, such as Jamaica and India, who were currently teaching in middle and high schools across the U.S. Each teacher represented a unique school to provide diverse perspectives. .

Data Collection Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire consisting of 20 open-ended questions administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed to gather teachers' perceptions of inquiry-based learning, including its importance, effectiveness, challenges in implementation, preparedness for its use, and professional development needs. The 20 questions were organized into categories addressing various aspects of teaching practices, cultural influences, and specific barriers faced in the classroom.

Data Analysis The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed thematically. The responses were examined for patterns, similarities, and differences across the three groups of participants: Filipino teachers in the Philippines (DepEd), Filipino teachers in the U.S., and international

teachers from countries such as Jamaica and India. The analysis focused on key themes such as teaching strategies, cultural influences, challenges in implementing inquiry-based learning, and the teachers' professional development needs. Data was systematically coded and organized to provide an in-depth understanding of the various perspectives, facilitating a comparative analysis of the experiences and practices across different educational contexts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparative Perceptions of Filipino Teachers in DepEd, U.S. International Teachers, and Filipino Teachers in the U.S. Regarding the Effectiveness of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)

Table 1				
Teacher Group	Student Engagement	Student Engagement Frequency	Learning Outcomes	Learning Outcomes Frequency
DepEd Teachers	Very Effective	6	Very Effective	6
	Effective	4	Effective	4
	Neutral	1	Neutral	1
U.S. International Teachers	Very Effective	2	Very Effective	2
	Effective	5	Effective	6
	Neutral	1	Neutral	-
Filipino Teachers in U.S.	Very Effective	6	Very Effective	8
	Effective	7	Effective	4
	Neutral	-	Neutral	-

In this combined table 1, the perceptions of Filipino teachers in DepEd, U.S. international teachers, and Filipino teachers in the U.S. regarding the effectiveness of inquiry-based science teaching (IBL) on student engagement and learning outcomes are compared. The DepEd teachers show a relatively balanced perception, with a majority (54.5%) rating IBL as Very Effective for both student engagement and learning outcomes, and a smaller portion (9%) rating it as Neutral. This indicates a strong belief in the value of IBL, with a few teachers remaining uncertain about its impact. On the other hand, U.S. international teachers have a more mixed perception. Although 22.2% rate IBL as Very Effective for both student engagement and learning outcomes, a larger proportion (55.5%) rate it as Effective, and a small percentage (11.1%) rated it as Neutral for student engagement. This suggests that international teachers might perceive some challenges or variations in the implementation of IBL, especially in engaging students in diverse classrooms. Filipino teachers in the U.S. appear to have the most favorable views on IBL, with a significant portion (61.5%) rating its effectiveness as Very Effective for learning outcomes and student engagement. This group also had the highest percentage of Very Effective ratings in both categories, which could be attributed to their experience with both the Philippine and U.S. educational systems, providing them a broader perspective on the effectiveness of IBL more

interactive, thoughtful and cooperative followed by the development of critical thinking skills (60%)

Table 1: Perceptions of Inquiry-Based

Table 2.a Impact of IBL on Student Motivation and Outcomes

Based on the collected responses, the impact of inquiry-based learning (IBL) in classrooms is notably positive in terms of student engagement and motivation, though there are some challenges that need addressing.

Best Observable Outcomes: The most frequently reported positive outcomes from employing IBL are increased student engagement and participation (75%), which indicates that the students are more actively involved in their learning processes. This is an enhanced collaboration among students (50%), suggesting that IBL encourages a learning environment. These outcomes point to the effectiveness of IBL in fostering higher-order cognitive skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are critical for students' academic success. These factors should be considered when planning and implementing IBL in diverse educational settings.

The results align with existing literature, emphasizing the efficacy of IBL in fostering active and deeper learning experiences. Caswell and LaBrie [37] reported similar findings, where students involved in IBL activities demonstrated heightened motivation and confidence. This resonates with the 75% of respondents in this study who identified increased engagement as the most prominent benefit. By allowing students to explore concepts through inquiry and discovery, IBL cultivates intrinsic motivation and a sense of ownership over their learning process [37]

Best Observable Outcomes	Frequency of Responses	Percentage (%)
Increased student engagement and participation	15	75%
Improved critical thinking skills	12	60%
Enhanced collaboration among students	10	50%
Retention of knowledge and understanding	9	45%
Increased creativity in student projects	8	40%
Better communication skills among students	6	30%
Development of problem-solving skills	5	25%
Enthusiasm for learning	4	20%

Table 2a

Least Observable Outcomes	Frequency of Responses	Percentage (%)
Unequal participation among students	18	90%
Limited time to cover curriculum content	15	75%
Difficulty managing classroom dynamics	10	50%
Resistance from students to IBL approach	8	40%
Increased workload for the teacher	7	35%
Decreased focus or attention span in students	5	25%
Confusion over expectations or instructions	4	20%
Inconsistent learning outcomes	3	15%

Least Observable Outcomes On the downside, the most frequently cited challenges include unequal participation among students (90%), Table 2a which highlights the difficulty in ensuring all students are equally involved in inquiry-based activities. Additionally, limited time to cover the curriculum (75%) remains a significant concern, reflecting the time-intensive nature of IBL Table 2b. Teachers also reported difficulty managing classroom dynamics (50%) and resistance from some students to the IBL approach (40%), underscoring the complex demands on educators implementing this pedagogy.

Table 2b

Effect of IBL on Student Motivation	Frequency of Responses	Percentage (%)
Significantly increases motivation	12	60%
Somewhat increases motivation	7	35%

These outcomes suggest that while IBL can be highly beneficial for many students, its success heavily depends on teacher preparation and classroom management. Archer-Kuhn *et al.* [38] emphasizes the potential of IBL to enhance student engagement by empowering learners to explore their own questions and projects actively [38].

Impact on Student Motivation:

The perception of IBL's effect on student motivation is overwhelmingly positive, with 60% of teachers reporting that it significantly increases motivation. Similar findings Gibson and Chase [39] explored the longitudinal impact of an inquiry-based science program on middle school students. They found that IBL improved students' attitudes toward science, enhancing their motivation and engagement over time [39]. However, only 5% of teachers observed a decrease in motivation, which could be linked to the challenges in participation and resistance noted earlier. These findings underscore the potential of IBL to foster greater student enthusiasm and drive toward learning, which is essential for long-term academic success.

In summary, while IBL shows strong positive effects on student outcomes, particularly in engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration, challenges related to participation, time management, and classroom dynamics remain. These factors should be considered when planning and implementing IBL in diverse educational settings.

Table 2.b: Teachers' Perception of IBL's Impact on Student Motivation

Challenges Encountered and Effective Strategies for Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in Different Educational Contexts

Filipino teachers transitioning from the Philippines to the U.S. face significant challenges, including cultural differences, classroom management adjustments, and overcoming language barriers. Strategies such as culturally responsive teaching and professional development opportunities help address these obstacles. Similarly, Caballes *et al.* [40] highlights that beginning science teachers' understanding of IBL is critical to its effective implementation. Their study underscores the need for professional training to overcome challenges, such as maintaining student motivation, which resonates with the identified strategies of adapting teaching methods to U.S. expectations and engaging in professional development.

DepEd teachers in the Philippines encounter barriers like limited teaching materials, curriculum restrictions, and heavy workloads, which hinder effective IBL implementation. Caballes *et al.* [40] further validate these findings, noting that challenges in IBL, such as resource limitations and logistical hurdles, require creative solutions like resource-sharing and collaborative teaching, as seen in the strategies employed by DepEd teachers [40].

For international teachers in the U.S., understanding cultural differences and modifying lesson plans are key to successful IBL implementation. Caballes *et al.* (2020) emphasize the role of motivation and preparation in overcoming such barriers, supporting the idea that professional development and effective use of available resources are essential strategies for mitigating challenges across diverse contexts [40].

Table 3: Challenges Encountered and Effective Strategies for Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) in Different Educational Context

Category	Challenges Encountered	Effective Strategies
Filipino Teachers Who moved from the Philippines to the U. S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Classroom management styles -Cultural differences in student behavior - Language barriers - Differences in curriculum standards - Student engagement strategies - Assessment and grading practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adapting classroom management to U.S. norms - Building rapport with students - Incorporating culturally responsive teaching - Modifying lesson plans to fit IBL strategies - Seeking professional development opportunities
DepEd Teachers in the Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to teaching materials -Curriculum restrictions -Heavy workload or time constraints -Lack of familiarity with IBL strategies - Insufficient support from school administration - Student readiness for IBL approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leveraging available resources creatively - Collaborating with colleagues to share materials - Incorporating blended learning and technology - Participating in professional development to learn IBL strategies
American International Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborating with U.S. colleagues - Understanding cultural differences in student expectations - Modifying lesson plans to fit IBL strategies - Seeking professional development opportunities - Utilizing technology and resources available in the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking professional development opportunities - Modifying lesson plans and assessments to align with IBL - Utilizing technology effectively - Collaborative lesson planning with colleagues

Comprehensive Discussion: Focus Areas for Inquiry-Based Science Teaching in Professional Development

In examining the areas of focus for inquiry-based science teaching in professional development (PD) programs across different groups of respondents, several key trends emerge, with distinct priorities for each group.

For **Filipino teachers in the U.S.**, there is a strong emphasis on designing engaging inquiry-based lessons that involve critical thinking and problem-solving. These teachers prefer PD opportunities that allow them to first experience the strategies within faculty groups, ensuring they are prepared to implement them independently. Additionally, they highlight the importance of facilitating student-led investigations, particularly through STEM programs and project-based learning workshops. Interdisciplinary approaches, especially in STEAM teaching, are also seen as crucial for fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They also recognize the need for building a classroom culture that supports inquiry, with an emphasis on student-driven instructional strategies and fostering a collaborative classroom environment. Technology-enhanced learning is another area they deem essential, particularly in supporting student-led investigations.

For **U.S. teachers**, similar themes emerge, with a focus on designing engaging, hands-on activities that facilitate student-driven learning. They stress the importance of PD that provides practical strategies for creating inquiry-rich learning

environments. Like their Filipino counterparts, U.S. teachers also prioritize PD on facilitating student-led investigations, particularly through STEM programs and project-based learning. Interdisciplinary teaching strategies are viewed as important for fostering cross-curricular inquiry and building a supportive classroom culture is seen as key to ensuring students are comfortable in engaging with inquiry-based learning. Additionally, U.S. teachers emphasize the integration of technology, seeing it as a powerful tool to support and enhance student investigations.

For **DepEd teachers in the Philippines**, the focus of PD is largely on the design of inquiry-based lessons that encourage active participation and critical thinking. These teachers also call for more PD on facilitating student-led investigations, particularly in the form of investigatory projects and research. Interdisciplinary approaches, especially in STEM, are important to them, as they help students make connections across subjects. Building a classroom culture that supports inquiry is another area that DepEd teachers feel requires more focus in PD programs, particularly in fostering environments where students feel comfortable exploring questions independently. While technology integration is not as strongly emphasized in this group, there is a recognition that technology could play a supportive role in enhancing inquiry-based teaching.

Table 4. Focus areas for inquiry-based science teaching in professional development programs, grouped by the respondents' backgrounds:

Focus Areas	Filipino Teachers in the U.S.	U.S. Teachers	DepEd Teachers in the Philippines
Designing Engaging Inquiry-Based Lessons	Emphasis on critical thinking, problem-solving, and hands-on experience in faculty groups.	Focus on practical strategies for designing inquiry-rich learning environments.	Emphasis on active participation and critical thinking in lesson design.
Facilitating Student-Led Investigations	Strong focus on student-led investigations, especially in STEM programs and project-based learning workshops.	Strong focus on facilitating student-driven investigations through STEM and project-based learning.	Focus on investigatory projects and scientific research, often with hands-on experience.
Integrating Interdisciplinary Approaches	High priority on STEAM teaching to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	Emphasis on interdisciplinary strategies for cross-curricular inquiry.	Interest in interdisciplinary approaches, especially in STEM, to connect learning across subjects.
Building a Classroom Culture that Supports Inquiry	Focus on student-driven instructional strategies and a collaborative classroom environment.	Importance of creating inquiry-rich classroom environments and fostering student independence.	Emphasis on creating a classroom culture where students feel comfortable exploring and questioning independently.
Utilizing Technology-Enhanced Learning	Acknowledged as essential, particularly for supporting student-led investigations.	Strong emphasis on integrating technology to enhance student investigations.	Growing interest in technology as a supportive tool, but not as heavily emphasized.

In summary, all groups of respondents prioritize the importance of hands-on experience and student-driven learning. However, Filipino teachers in the U.S. place a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary teaching and technology-enhanced learning, while U.S. teachers focus on

creating inquiry-rich environments and student-led investigations. DepEd teachers in the Philippines stress the need for PD on lesson design and student investigations, with growing interest in the integration of technology into their teaching practices.

Adapting inquiry-based learning (IBL) practices from the teachers' current educational systems to improve teaching in their previous systems

Filipino teachers in the U.S. emphasized the importance of creating inquiry-driven projects and fostering critical thinking through research and question formation. U.S. teachers noted the integration of project-based learning and the use of technology to promote critical thinking and research skills. In contrast, DepEd teachers in the Philippines highlighted the use of STEM/STEAM programs and creativity with limited resources as their key approaches to promoting inquiry.

Adapting Practices from Previous Systems:

Teachers in both the U.S. and the Philippines acknowledged the benefits of bringing structured routines, time management skills, and foundational knowledge from their previous systems into their current practices. For example, U.S. teachers identified the value of time management skills and foundational knowledge in ensuring that students are well-prepared for inquiry-based tasks. Similarly, Filipino teachers in the U.S. and DepEd teachers in the Philippines emphasized the importance of resourcefulness and creativity, particularly when there are limited materials in the classroom.

Technology Integration:

A common theme among U.S. and Filipino teachers is the integration of technology to enhance inquiry. U.S. teachers highlighted the importance of technology for research and virtual experiments, while Filipino teachers in the U.S. saw technology as an essential tool for supporting inquiry-driven investigations. In contrast, DepEd teachers mentioned the potential for technology to enhance inquiry, but also pointed

out the significant barriers they face due to limited access to digital resources and infrastructure.

Hands-on and Collaborative Learning:

All groups agreed on the importance of hands-on learning and collaboration. In line with the findings from Filipino teachers in the U.S., International U.S. teachers, and DepEd teachers in the Philippines, the importance of hands-on learning and collaboration was consistently emphasized across all groups. Teachers in both countries noted that project-based learning (PBL) is essential for engaging students in real-world problems [41]. Additionally, Filipino teachers in the U.S. highlighted the value of structured student talk and the development of inquiry-based projects, which aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory focus on collaborative dialogue as essential for cognitive development [42]. These findings are further supported by Darby and Coyle [43], who suggest that hands-on, collaborative learning promotes deeper understanding and engagement.

Challenges and Needs:

Filipino teachers in the U.S. and DepEd teachers in the Philippines highlighted the lack of resources as a significant challenge to implementing IBL effectively. While U.S. teachers benefit from structured frameworks and abundant resources for inquiry-based practices, Filipino teachers are often constrained by limited access to digital tools and materials. This disparity emphasizes the need for more equitable distribution of resources to fully support IBL in all contexts.

Table 5: Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) Practice Adapted Between Educational Systems

Category	Filipino Teachers in the U.S.	U.S. Teachers	DepEd Teachers in the Philippines
Adapting IBL from Current System	Focus on creating projects based on inquiry; utilizing research and forming questions.	Integrating project-based learning, using technology for research, and promoting critical thinking.	Focus on STEM/STEAM programs, student-driven inquiry, and fostering creativity with limited resources.
Adapting Practices from Previous System	Bringing structured student talk strategies from previous systems.	Adapting structured routines, time management skills, and foundational knowledge from traditional systems.	Resourcefulness and creativity with limited materials, teaching students to innovate with what's available.
Technology Integration	Use of technology to enhance student-driven investigations and access diverse resources.	Emphasis on technology integration, especially for conducting research and virtual experiments.	Introducing more technology to support inquiry-based learning, especially for resource-constrained classrooms.
Student Autonomy & Collaboration	Emphasizing student autonomy and collaboration in inquiry projects.	Focusing on collaborative learning and student-driven projects, especially in STEM programs.	Encouraging more collaborative learning and autonomy in student research and exploration.
Inquiry in Previous System	Shifting from traditional, teacher-centered approaches to student-driven inquiry.	Balancing traditional teacher-led instruction with student-driven inquiry.	Emphasizing foundational knowledge and discipline from traditional systems to enhance inquiry in current settings.
Hands-on Learning	Hands-on projects like STEM/STEAM activities to promote inquiry-based learning.	Incorporating hands-on, project-based learning to engage students in real-world problems.	Fostering hands-on learning through available materials to build critical thinking skills.
Support for IBL Implementation	Firsthand experiences in inquiry, questioning, and experimentation through professional development.	Structured frameworks and resources that support inquiry-based learning in the classroom.	Limited resources and infrastructure hinder the full application of inquiry-based learning, but resourcefulness compensates.

Overall, the discussion shows that while there are universal strategies for implementing IBL, each group of teachers recognizes the need for adapting these practices to their unique educational systems. By integrating best practices from both systems, teachers can create more effective and dynamic learning environments.

4. CONCLUSION AND REMCOMENDATION:

The study reveals that teacher across different educational contexts—Filipino DepEd teachers, Filipino teachers in the U.S., and U.S. international teachers—generally view inquiry-based learning (IBL) positively, emphasizing its impact on student engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration. However, challenges like unequal student participation, limited time, and classroom management persist. Filipino teachers in the U.S. hold the most favorable views on IBL, likely due to their unique exposure to both Philippine and U.S. systems, while DepEd teachers face limitations in resources and administrative support. To address these issues, the study recommends implementing professional development (PD) focused on designing inquiry-based lessons, managing classroom dynamics, and facilitating student-led investigations. Increasing access to teaching resources and support for DepEd teachers could alleviate the impact of limited materials and heavy workloads. Additionally, providing PD on cultural responsiveness and classroom management for international and transitioned teachers could help them adapt IBL methods to diverse classrooms. Finally, integrating technology to support IBL—especially in fostering student-led projects in resource-rich environments—could further enhance teaching practices across varied educational settings.

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