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Contribution of Inquiry-based Instruction in Teaching and Learning of Kiswahili Literature in Kongwa District Secondary Schools, Tanzania

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Abstract: *This study examined the implementation of Inquiry-Based Instruction (IBI) in Kiswahili literature lessons within secondary schools in Kongwa District, Tanzania. Guided by a parallel convergent mixed-methods design, data were collected from 12 Kiswahili teachers and 125 Form Three students across two public secondary schools using closed-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a structured observation protocol. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The findings reveal a partial, superficial enactment of inquiry elements in classroom practice. Classroom observations indicated that questioning was heavily skewed toward lower-order recall prompts (70.0%), whereas higher-order (23.3%) and inquiry-specific questions (6.7%) were sparse and predominantly confined to lesson conclusions. Although students reported moderate engagement in group discussions (56.0% agreement), qualitative observations classified group inquiry at a developing level (Level 2 out of 4), characterized by teacher-driven tasks, group-leader dominance, and limited critical debate (rated 2 out of 5). Furthermore, student agreement on independent information seeking was low (30.0%), and resource utilization was almost entirely restricted to standard literature textbooks, with no digital, multimedia, or supplementary texts observed. Generally, while basic participatory techniques are present, they do not consistently extend to sustained literary investigation, critical textual analysis, or evidence-based argumentation. To align classroom practice with competence-based syllabus goals, teachers can consider integrating higher-order interpretive questions throughout lessons, structure group tasks to foster critical dialogue, and utilize locally accessible supplementary materials for textual comparison.*

Keywords: *Inquiry-Based Instruction, Kiswahili Literature, Competence-Based Curriculum, Secondary Education*

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1. Introduction

Teaching literature requires learners to examine how language, characterisation and narrative choices produce meaning. A classroom can therefore be active without providing sustained opportunities for literary inquiry: students may answer questions and work in groups while reproducing an interpretation supplied by the teacher. Distinguishing participation from investigation is important when assessing how learner-centred pedagogy is enacted in a specific subject.

Globally, research conceptualises inquiry as a process linking questions, investigation, conclusions and discussion, rather than as an isolated teaching technique

(Pedaste et al., 2015). In literature, investigation can involve locating relevant passages, comparing interpretations and testing an argument against evidence. These activities do not require every learner to discover literary concepts independently. Appropriate guidance can support inquiry, and the relationship between teacher explanation and learner investigation depends on the instructional purpose and learners' prior knowledge (de Jong et al., 2023).

The Tanzanian curriculum provides a relevant policy context. The 2023 Fasihi ya Kiswahili syllabus for Forms III–IV emphasises literary criticism, logical argument and creative production. It also identifies participatory approaches, investigation and consultation of different information sources as relevant to teaching and learning (Wizara ya Elimu, Sayansi na Teknolojia, 2023). This syllabus is used here as a contemporary curricular reference; the available study record does not establish which syllabus edition governed every observed lesson.

Tanzanian evidence nevertheless shows that adopting competence-based curriculum terminology does not ensure corresponding classroom practice. Komba and Mwandanji (2015) documented limitations in teachers' understanding, lesson planning, learner participation and formative assessment in secondary schools. Vavrus and Bartlett (2012) further demonstrated that teachers' understandings of learner-centred pedagogy are shaped by their social and material working conditions. These studies provide context, but neither directly establishes how inquiry elements operate in the Kiswahili literature lessons examined here.

The paper aims to determine the elements of inquiry-based instruction used in teaching and learning Kiswahili literature in Kongwa District secondary schools. The guiding research question is: what are the inquiry-based instruction elements used in Kiswahili literature lesson and how?

1.1 Statement of the problem

The fact that many teachers in Sub-Saharan African nations still use traditional teaching methods (teacher-centered) in their courses after years of implementing IBI has alarmed education experts and scholars (Nhase et al., 2021). Inquiry-based instruction is limited used in many Tanzanian schools, although in certain nations, like South Africa, it is required for classroom education, at least for science-related topics. This is somewhat different from Tanzanian reality, though (Ramnarain & Hlatswayo, 2018). Instead of being the norm, its adoption has continued to be the exception. This study was motivated by the researchers' worries that transformation programs that advocated IBI as the basis for teaching Kiswahili had not resulted in the desired improvements in Tanzanian education and training policy and practice.

Several scholarly works, such as those by David and Nsengimana (2022), have attempted to connect IBI and language in Tanzania. However, these works have all concentrated on enhancing cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP) in science education rather than fundamental interpersonal communication skills (BICS). Both CALP and BICS are necessary for Kiswahili literature. According to the literature, teachers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs have a significant impact on their classroom instructional practices (Lebak, 2015; Luft, 2009; Luft et al., 2011; Ozel & Luft, 2013; Wong et al., 2015; Hutner & Markman, 2017; Sun et al., 2014; Ramnarain & Hlatswayo, 2018).

The reviewed studies (David & Nsengimana, 2022; Lebak, 2015; Luft, 2009; Luft et al., 2011; Ozel & Luft, 2013; Wong et al., 2015; Hutner & Markman, 2017; Sun et al., 2014; Ramnarain & Hlatswayo, 2018) have made an attempt to establish the contribution of inquiry-based learning, however, little is known on how this can foster the teaching and learning of Kiswahili literature in Tanzanian schools. It is against this background the current study aims to explore the contribution of inquiry-based instruction in teaching and learning of Kiswahili Literature in Kongwa District Secondary schools, Tanzania.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Inquiry and Literary Interpretation

Pedaste et al. (2015) identify orientation, conceptualisation, investigation, conclusion and discussion as broad inquiry phases. Applied to literary interpretation, this framework directs attention to whether students encounter a meaningful interpretive problem, examine evidence and communicate a reasoned conclusion. This application is an analytical adaptation to literature, rather than a claim that scientific inquiry and literary interpretation follow identical procedures. A question about a character's motives becomes investigative when learners examine competing textual evidence and justify their interpretation.

Evidence on classroom discussion is especially pertinent to literature. Murphy et al. (2009) found that several discussion approaches increased student talk and improved text comprehension, although improvements in critical thinking and reasoning were less consistent. Their synthesis cautions against treating discussion frequency as a sufficient indicator of analytical depth. For the current study, group participation and critical debate are therefore examined separately.

2.2 Guidance and Learner Responsibility

Lazonder and Harmsen's (2016) meta-analysis of 72 studies found positive effects of guidance on inquiry activities, performance and learning outcomes. However, this evidence concerns inquiry across settings and does not establish an effect in Kongwa's Kiswahili literature classes. Its relevance is conceptual: teacher support can enable investigation without supplying all conclusions. The distinction is between guidance that helps learners reason and direction that confines them to reproducing predetermined responses.

Recent debate also supports a more contextual understanding of instructional choices. De Jong et al. (2023) argue that inquiry and direct instruction can be combined at appropriate points. A literature teacher might explain an unfamiliar device before asking students to investigate its possible meanings. Accordingly, the presence of teacher explanation is not itself evidence of weak inquiry; the central issue is whether students subsequently make substantive decisions about evidence and interpretation.

2.3 Tanzanian Context and Study Gap

In Tanzania, Komba and Mwandanji (2015) studied 186 teachers in 13 secondary schools in Mbeya and reported limited implementation of several competence-based practices. Their findings indicate that curriculum intentions require pedagogical support, but they cannot be assumed to describe all districts or subjects. Vavrus and Bartlett (2012), working with six Tanzanian secondary schools, highlighted the influence of teachers' views of knowledge and the conditions of teaching. Together, these studies suggest examining both task design and available resources when interpreting classroom practice.

The current curricular emphasis on criticism and logical argument strengthens the case for examining how Kiswahili literature learners encounter questions and construct interpretations (Wizara ya Elimu, Sayansi na Teknolojia, 2023). The gap addressed here is specific: available general evidence on curriculum implementation provides limited detail about the combination of inquiry elements enacted in the selected Kongwa lessons. Three dimensions guide the analysis: the cognitive demand of questions, learner responsibility within group tasks and resources used to support investigation. They provide an organising framework, not a validated composite measure of inquiry fidelity.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist framework, knowledge is conceptualized as a socially, culturally, and historically contextualized construct mediated through language (Moate, 2010). Within language-integrated pedagogical approaches, this orientation is vital for transforming students' receptive language skills and academic vocabulary into active communicative output, such as speaking and writing (Llinares & Pastrana, 2013; Moate, 2010). Applied to Kiswahili literature, the instructional process is governed by how learners collaboratively construct meaning and apply it to real-world contexts. Socio-constructivism encompasses three essential classroom interactional modes: teacher–student, peer–peer, and student–material dynamics. By emphasizing how social contexts condition pedagogical practices and perceptions (Moate, 2010), this theory provides a robust framework for examining teacher and student attitudes toward Inquiry-Based Instruction (IBI) in Kongwa District secondary schools.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a mixed-methods approach (Kothari, 2012). This study involved gathering both qualitative and quantitative data perspectives on the use of IBI in teaching and learning Kiswahili literature in in Kongwa District Secondary schools.

3.2 Research Design

A strategy used in the scientific investigation of a phenomena is referred to as the research design. To get dependable results, it entails combining data and all relevant factors (Nafi, 2020). In order to simultaneously gather quantitative and qualitative data, this study employed a parallel convergent design. This focused on the application of IBI for the teaching and learning of Kiswahili literature.

3.3 Study Area

The study area was strategically selected to be Kongwa District within the Dodoma Region of Tanzania, a location that offers a diverse range of socioeconomic and cultural characteristics crucial for providing rich, context-specific data. This selection aligns with the need for a defined research location (Kothari, 2012) and is justified by the district's proactive yet ongoing efforts to integrate modern, learner-centered classroom practices among its teaching staff. Specifically, Kongwa District was chosen because its educational environment represents a significant transition point where policies aimed at equipping teachers with new, active pedagogical experiences (like Inquiry-Based Instruction) are in place, but the actual classroom practice is acknowledged to still be in its premature, developing stages. This scenario provides a unique and relevant empirical context to explore the actual contribution, challenges, and perceptions surrounding the

implementation of Inquiry-Based Instruction in Kiswahili Literature.

3.4 Target Population

The population in which the researcher is interested or in which population enquiries are undertaken in order to establish generalisation is referred to as the target population. Creswell (2018) asserts that in order to ensure that the findings are generalisable, the target population is essential for establishing the study's framework and dependability. The target population for this study included 125 form three students secondary school students form two schools in Kongwa District. Also, the study involved 12 Kiswahili teachers determined by the area of competency, which is "Kiswahili Literature".

3.5 Sampling and Sample Size

3.5.1 Sample size

Sample size refers to the specific number of participants or observations selected from a target population, serving as a critical determinant of research accuracy, reliability, and representativeness (Creswell, 2018). Establishing an optimal sample size minimizes sampling error and bias, enhances statistical power, and strengthens the generalizability of findings to the broader population. While teachers' selection remains purposively, Yamane's (1967) formula was applied to calculate an appropriate sample size for a large target student population:

$$n=\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

N= population (142); n = sample size, e = margin of error (0.05)

$$n=\frac{142}{1+142(0.05)^2}=125$$

3.5.2 Criterion-based Sampling

To ensure an objective and unbiased selection process, this study applied a criterion sampling strategy to select two public secondary schools in Kongwa District. The selection criterion was based on academic performance, categorizing schools across three distinct achievement levels: low, medium, and high.

3.5.3 Purposive Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was employed to target Form Three Kiswahili teachers based on their instructional background. Their specialized subject knowledge makes them a valuable source of data regarding Inquiry-Based Learning practices in Kiswahili Literature.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Data collection methods encompass the specific procedures used to gather evidence aligned with a study's research objectives. These methods are broadly categorized as qualitative or quantitative based on the nature of the research questions (Creswell, 2018). For the purposes of this study, data were collected using qualitative interviews, an observation protocol, and a structured questionnaire, as elaborated below.

3.6 1 Questionnaire

A closed-ended questionnaire is a structured instrument designed to gather quantifiable, statistically processable data from study participants (Fink, 2020). This tool is particularly suited for this study as it allows for the efficient collection and objective analysis of data across a large sample. Through structured Likert-type scales, pedagogical practices such as higher-order questioning techniques and resource utilization are operationalized into discrete, measurable numerical system of measurement.

3.6.2 Interviews

As Merriam and Tisdell (2020) note, semi-structured interviews offer an open-ended data collection framework that enables researchers to capture participants' nuanced perspectives on a specific subject. In this study, this technique was employed to gather teachers' views and experiences regarding the implementation of Inquiry-Based Instruction (IBI) in Kiswahili literature lessons.

3.6.3 Observation protocol

The deployment of an Observation Protocol is empirically justified as the principal mechanism for addressing the objective: *To determine IBI elements commonly used in the teaching and learning of Kiswahili literature in Kongwa District Secondary Schools.* While self-reported instruments such as interviews reflect teachers' perceptions, direct observation provides real-time, empirical evidence of actual instructional practices (Creswell, 2014). Given that Inquiry-Based Instruction (IBI) is essentially behavioral, direct observation offers the most reliable means of evaluating key instructional components such as higher-order questioning, student-driven investigation, and resource deployment thereby bridging the discrepancy between reported and actual classroom practices (Ramnarain & Hlatshwayo, 2018). Utilizing a structured observation schedule ensures data collection remains systematic, standardized across classrooms, and precisely aligned with measurable IBI metrics to evaluate the extent of pedagogical integration.

3.7 Research trustworthiness and reliability

Research trustworthiness hinges on the validity and dependability of study conclusions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Lincoln and Guba (2020)

outline four essential criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Establishing these standards is crucial for this study to accurately evaluate whether Inquiry-Based (IB) learning contributes to Kiswahili Literature instruction. To ensure content validity, the research instruments were reviewed by academic supervisors and subject-matter specialists. Additionally, a test-retest procedure was administered to evaluate instrument stability and reinforce overall data quality.

3.8 Data analysis

This study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data for analysis. Qualitative audio recordings were transcribed, translated into English, and analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006). six-step framework. To distill extensive interview transcripts into manageable data points, granular coding was conducted across lines, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, guided by a structured codebook to maintain analytical consistency (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The generated codes were subsequently organized in Microsoft Excel, where pivot table operations were executed to derive frequencies, percentages, and thematic categories. Conversely, quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means.

3.9 Ethical consideration

The study strictly adhered to ethical standards, securing formal research clearances from St. John's University of Tanzania and the Kongwa District Authorities. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants either verbally or in writing. Participant identities were strictly protected to ensure confidentiality, with data utilized exclusively for research purposes. Furthermore, participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Questioning and opportunities for investigation

An analysis of classroom questioning practices reveals an instructional profile predominantly oriented toward lower-level cognitive engagement rather than sustained literary investigation. As shown in Table 1, recall questions constituted the vast majority of observed prompts at 70.0%, whereas higher-order questions accounted for 23.3%, and inquiry-specific questions comprised a mere 6.7% of the overall distribution. These metrics demonstrate that teacher questioning was primarily deployed to verify factual plot details and basic textual comprehension rather than to stimulate critical analysis or student-led investigation. Although higher-order and inquiry-driven prompts were occasionally present, their minimal representation indicates that opportunities for students to evaluate competing interpretations, examine textual evidence, and defend reasoned arguments remain peripheral in Kiswahili literature lessons.

Table 1: Reported distribution of classroom questions

Question category	Reported percentage
Recall	70.0
Higher order	23.3
Inquiry specific	6.7

Furthermore, the recall prompts functioned primarily to check plot information, whereas inquiry-specific prompts required learners to return to the text and consider conflicting evidence. It also reports that higher-order questions tended to appear near the end of lessons. These findings indicate that questioning was present, but sustained investigation occupied a comparatively limited position in the reported profile.

Again, a question that checks who acted in a story has a different function from one asking why an action can support competing readings. The observed profile suggests that learners had more opportunities to supply information than to test interpretive claims. However, missing question counts and coding details prevent assessment of variation across teachers, texts or lessons.

4.2 Overview and Profile of Student Perceptions

To complement the direct classroom observations, student self-reported data were analyzed to evaluate how learners experience and perceive elements of Inquiry-Based Instruction (IBI) in Kiswahili literature classrooms across Kongwa District secondary schools. While direct observation documents behavioral execution in real time, student surveys capture the subjective, cumulative classroom reality as experienced by the learners themselves.

The empirical distribution of student responses across the four inquiry-related dimensions—encountering challenging questions, seeking information independently, engaging in group discussions/debates, and demonstrating confidence in expressing alternative interpretations—is summarized in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Student Reports of Inquiry-Related Classroom Practices (N = 125)

Practice	Strongly Disagree (SD) %	Disagree (D) %	Neutral (N) %	Agree (A) %	Strongly Agree (SA) %	Cumulative Agree (A + SA) %	Cumulative Disagree (SD + D) %
Challenging questions or problems	14.0	16.0	28.0	34.0	8.0	42.0	30.0
Independent information seeking	14.0	32.0	24.0	20.0	10.0	30.0	46.0
Group discussions or debates	8.0	22.0	14.0	38.0	18.0	56.0	30.0
Confidence in different interpretation	12.0	16.0	34.0	24.0	14.0	38.0	28.0

Note: Data derived from student questionnaire responses. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place. Rows sum to 100.0%.

Overall, the data reveal a clear structural imbalance in how inquiry is operationalized. While peer interaction and group discussion are relatively prevalent (56.0% cumulative agreement), autonomous investigation and independent textual exploration are severely constrained (46.0% cumulative disagreement). Furthermore, substantial neutral response rates across items—ranging from 14.0% to 34.0%—highlight widespread ambiguity in student perceptions regarding their own feeling during literary analysis.

4.2.1 Exposure to Challenging Prompts and Cognitive Demand

Regarding the encounter with *challenging questions or problems*, 42.0% of students agreed or strongly agreed (34.0% Agree; 8.0% Strongly Agree) that their Kiswahili literature lessons presented intellectually demanding prompts. Conversely, 30.0% expressed disagreement (14.0% Strongly Disagree; 16.0% Disagree), while 28.0% remained neutral.

This distribution indicates that while a significant portion of students perceive their lessons as cognitively engaging, over half of the cohort (58.0%) either experience a diet of routine, low-level questioning or remain uncertain about what constitutes an intellectually challenging literary problem. In literature instruction, a challenging problem typically involves reconciling character motivations, evaluating thematic contradictions, or analyzing poetic symbolism. The fact that nearly a third of respondents actively reported a lack of challenging prompts aligns with the observational data, where recall and plot-summary questions comprised 70.0% of total teacher queries.

4.2.2 The Deficit in Autonomous Information Seeking

The item measuring *independent information seeking* yielded the most pronounced negative distribution in the dataset. Only 30.0% of respondents reported pursuing information independently (20.0% Agree; 10.0% Strongly Agree), whereas a dominant 46.0% cumulative majority

expressed disagreement (14.0% Strongly Disagree; 32.0% Disagree), alongside 24.0% neutral responses.

This finding demonstrates that the *Investigation* phase of inquiry is largely absent from the student experience. Students in these classrooms rarely step beyond the boundaries of teacher-provided notes or prescribed textbook extracts to consult secondary literary criticisms, dictionary resources, or historical contexts. This marked deficit reflects both material constraints (e.g., lack of supplementary texts and library infrastructure) and a pedagogical culture that positions the teacher as the primary, if not sole, transmitter of textual meaning.

4.2.3 Collaborative Discussion vs. Deep Critical Debate

Of all four indicators, *group discussions or debates* received the highest level of student endorsement, with a cumulative agreement of 56.0% (38.0% Agree; 18.0% Strongly Agree). Disagreeing responses accounted for 30.0% (8.0% Strongly Disagree; 22.0% Disagree), while neutrality was low at 14.0%.

The strong agreement for group discussion confirms that social, peer-to-peer seating arrangements and group tasks are a regular fixture of Kiswahili literature classrooms in Kongwa District. However, when evaluated alongside qualitative observation, a critical nuance emerges: while group *talk* is frequent, it rarely elevates to critical debate or rigorous thematic inquiry. Group activity in these settings predominantly involves cooperative task completion such as compiling lists of themes or summarizing assigned novel chapters rather than evaluating competing literary interpretations.

4.2.4 Epistemic Self-Efficacy and Interpretive Ambiguity

When asked whether they felt confident in offering different interpretations of literary texts, 38.0% of students expressed agreement (24.0% Agree; 14.0% Strongly Agree), 28.0% disagreed (12.0% Strongly Disagree; 16.0% Disagree), and a notable 34.0% selected neutral.

The high concentration of neutral responses (34.0%) the highest across all survey items is particularly revealing. In literary studies, meaning is inherently pluralistic, requiring readers to construct arguments based on textual evidence. The substantial proportion of neutral and disagreeing students (62.0% combined) indicates widespread hesitation to venture beyond the correct or standard interpretations endorsed by teachers or national examination marking schemes. Students demonstrate low epistemic self-efficacy, viewing literary interpretation not as an open domain for evidence-based argument, but as a risk-laden task where diverging from the teacher's perspective may lead to academic penalty.

4.3. Group participation and interpretive responsibility

Table 3: Reported indicators of group inquiry

Indicator	Reported classification	Observation summary
Student interaction	3 out of 5	Talk sometimes became off topic or was dominated by a group leader.
Group inquiry level	Level 2 developing	Students followed teacher supplied prompts.
Critical debate	2 out of 5	Groups generally pursued consensus rather than challenging interpretations.

Among the four surveyed practice items, group discussions and debates generated the highest level of student consensus, achieving a cumulative agreement of 56.0% compared to 30.0% disagreement and 14.0% neutrality. Complementary observational logs supported this trend, rating student interaction at 3 out of 5 and categorizing overall group inquiry as Level 2 (developing inquiry). Together, these findings indicate that group participation is an established structural feature in these classrooms. However, qualitative observations qualify the pedagogical depth of this engagement: group tasks were predominantly teacher-directed often limited to procedural activities like listing themes while critical debate scored low (2 out of 5) and discussions were frequently monopolized by group leaders. Consequently, while group seating and peer organization are structurally mature, shared epistemic responsibility such as posing original questions and

evaluating competing literary interpretations remains largely underdeveloped.

Only 38.0% of surveyed students expressed confidence in sharing alternative literary interpretations, while 28.0% disagreed and 34.0% remained neutral. Although these metrics do not definitively establish the root causes of restrained debate, they align with an uneven classroom climate regarding open interpretive dialogue. This finding echoes Murphy et al. (2009), who emphasize that an increase in student talk does not automatically translate into improved critical reasoning. Consequently, evaluating inquiry in these settings requires scrutinizing the qualitative depth of reasoning within group tasks rather than relying on discussion frequency as a proxy for genuine inquiry.

Teacher guidance should consequently preserve substantive decisions for learners. For example, a structured task could ask groups to compare two interpretations and explain which passages support each. This is a proposed instructional response, not an activity documented as tested by the present study. It retains manageable guidance while opening space for evidence selection and argument. Lazonder and Harmsen (2016) support the importance of guidance, but their synthesis does not establish the effectiveness of this proposed literature task.

4.4 Resources Supporting Literary Inquiry

Table 4 summarizes the learning resources recorded during classroom observations in Kongwa District secondary schools, along with the reported institutional contexts governing their availability. The observation data reflect a stark reliance on core literature textbooks for basic reading and definition copying, with noticeable deficits in supplementary texts, digital tools, and multimedia infrastructure.

Table 4: Learning resources recorded in the observation summary

Resource	Recorded use	Reported context
Literature textbook	Yes	Main source for reading and copying definitions.
Supplementary novels	No	Limited library funding was cited.
Multimedia	No	Electricity or projection facilities were reported unavailable in observed rooms.
Cultural artefacts	Yes	A traditional stool was used in a poetry lesson.
Internet or digital tools	No	School restrictions and data costs were cited.

The literature textbook was the principal recorded resource, while supplementary novels, multimedia and digital tools were not recorded as used. A cultural artefact appeared in a poetry lesson (Table 4). This pattern indicates limited variety in the reported resource use, rather than an entirely resource-free learning environment. Reported funding, infrastructure and access restrictions contextualise the pattern, but were not independently measured as predictors of inquiry.

A single text can support rigorous investigation when students compare passages, examine contradictions and defend competing interpretations. The findings therefore do not establish that limited resource variety caused weak inquiry. They suggest a narrower range of opportunities for comparison, especially where the textbook was used mainly for reading and copying definitions. The artefact example also indicates an accessible starting point for linking literary language to cultural experience, although its pedagogical effect was not measured.

Vavrus and Bartlett (2012) locate pedagogy within the social and material conditions of teaching, which helps contextualise the reported constraints. Resource improvement should nevertheless be linked to task design. Additional materials are useful when they prompt a comparison or clarify context; simply increasing their number does not ensure investigation. The immediate instructional opportunity is to use available texts and locally accessible materials for explicit evidence-based interpretation.

4.5 The IBI Use in Classroom Context

Across the sources, questioning and group participation were present, while independent investigation, critical debate and resource variety were less developed. The most defensible interpretation is partial enactment of inquiry elements in the reported lessons. The evidence supports distinguishing visible participation from responsibility for constructing and evaluating interpretations. It does not justify classifying all teaching in Kongwa as ineffective or

concluding that inquiry improved examination performance. de Jong et al. (2023) emphasizes that teacher explanation should be assessed by its function, such as preparing students for inquiry rather than necessarily displacing it.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study indicates that inquiry-based instruction in the selected Kiswahili literature lessons was practiced through questioning, group participation and limited resource use. Recall predominated in the reported questioning profile, and groups generally followed teacher-defined tasks. Student responses suggested more frequent exposure to group discussion than to independent information seeking, while confidence in alternative interpretations was uneven. Generally, the presence of inquiry elements did not consistently extend to sustained investigation and justification. This concerns reported classroom processes, not measured learning gains.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Kiswahili teachers need to integrating interpretive questions throughout lessons and require learners to connect claims to specific passages. Group tasks should allocate rotating responsibilities for questioning, evidence selection and explanation so that participation extends beyond the group spokesperson. Teachers should also model how to examine a competing interpretation without treating disagreement as error.

2. School leaders and district education officers should organise subject-specific professional learning around designing, observing and refining short literary inquiry tasks. Peer observation can focus on who poses questions, who selects evidence and how conclusions are justified. This approach would make professional development responsive to the practices identified here, while its effectiveness should be evaluated rather than assumed.

3. School leaders should support access to supplementary extracts, appropriate local artefacts and feasible offline materials, linking each resource to a clear interpretive task. Teacher educators and curriculum specialists should provide examples that combine concise explanation with guided investigation, especially for large classes. Researchers should subsequently examine a verified sample across more schools using repeated observations, explicit coding rules and documented instrument quality. A study measuring student interpretation would be needed before claims about learning benefits could be made.

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