

# The Development of Learning Achievement in Political Course Through Inquiry Method of Grade 9 Students in China

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to compare grade 9 Chinese students' learning achievement in political course before and after using the inquiry method and to investigate their satisfaction. The study employed a cluster random sampling of 30 grade 9 students from nine classes with mixed gender and learning abilities. The quantitative data were collected through lesson plans, learning achievement tests (pre-test and post-test), and student satisfaction questionnaires. The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using a paired sample t-test for the first research objective and the second one based on mean, standard deviation (SD), and thematic analysis. The research results showed that the learning achievement in political course improved significantly, with post-test scores ( $M = 37.90$ ,  $SD = 2.58$ ) being higher than pre-test scores ( $M = 27.10$ ,  $SD = 3.51$ ) at a statistical significance level of .05 ( $p < .05$ ). Additionally, the data collected from the students' satisfaction questionnaires showed that all items received the highest ratings from the participants, and all the data from the semi-structured interviews strongly supported the students' satisfaction, indicating that the students were satisfied with the inquiry method. Therefore, this study clearly demonstrated that the application of the inquiry method could improve students' learning achievement in the political course and their satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Learning achievement, Inquiry method, Political course, Students' satisfaction, Grade 9 Chinese students

## Introduction

Education is very important for the development of a country or a society, and is the fundamental way to cultivate innovative talents. Entering the 21st century, the Chinese Ministry of Education began the eighth basic education curriculum reform by integrating and reflecting on the theoretical and practical experience of previous education reforms (Wang, 2019). Many traditional educational ideas and teaching models are being updated, strengthening the main position of the classroom, and increasingly emphasizing the initiative of learning (Gong, 2022). We need to change the traditional teaching methods of "teachers teach and students listen" in order to promote educational reform, and adapt to the needs of social development and talent cultivation.

The 9th grade political course is a comprehensive course based on the life of junior high school students, with the fundamental purpose of guiding and promoting the development of junior high school students' ideology and morality. It is very important for cultivating students' ideology, morality, and the awareness of the rule of law. Comprehensiveness is a major feature of the 9th grade political course, which should keep pace with the times in teaching and reflect the student-centered thinking (Wang, 2015). However, traditional educational concepts cannot meet the needs of students' development, and it is difficult to achieve the teaching effectiveness and education goals of political course. It is urgent to explore teaching methods suitable for the current stage of educational development.

At present, some educators are using some new teaching methods, such as immersion, experiential, mixed and other methods to guide and educate students step by step. These teaching methods all have elements of inquiry, but there are still many problems

in the application of political course in grade 9. For example, blended teaching must combine offline and online learning. However, there are no certain standards for the specific allocation of online and offline teaching, and it is difficult to control the allocation of time; experiential teaching started from students' own cognitive characteristics and growth rules, and learned about knowledge and competences around them through their own practice. Although some students will show enthusiasm, it may not necessarily translate into learning outcomes; X, Y, Li (2022) mentioned that what immersion teaching advocates was to create a long-term and continuous process.

The application of the inquiry method affirms the dominant position of students in classroom teaching, plays a role in mobilizing students' enthusiasm for learning, allows students to learn actively, and truly makes knowledge their own. In the process of inquiry learning, students can actively interact with teachers and classmates through cooperation and communication, which is conducive to building a good teacher-student relationship and making the classroom atmosphere more harmonious (Z, Q, Li, 2022). Therefore, the application of the inquiry method can not only effectively transform the teacher-centered education mode in traditional teaching, but also promote the all-round development of students.

Based on the new changes in the content of the textbooks compiled by the Ministry, the Chinese Ministry of Education changed the name of the junior high school political textbooks in 2016. A new design has been carried out on the layout of the teaching materials and knowledge content, and the "exploration and sharing" module runs through the teaching materials (Wang, 2021). The learning process of the inquiry method is consistent with the writing and production of teaching material, so the inquiry method has great advantages in the course of politics (Zhang, 2020). The setting of many content modules in the new textbook requires students to discuss and explore to complete. The changes in the content of the textbook provide a carrier for the implementation of the inquiry method. It can be seen that political course in middle schools pay more and more attention to cultivating students' thinking ability and ability to apply knowledge to solve practical problems.

Combining practical experience in actual teaching in the past and the conversation with experienced old teachers, it is found that there are still some problems in the process of political teaching. On the one hand, some teachers still use more traditional teaching methods, teachers give lectures and pay no attention to the process of exploring the conclusions in the knowledge structure. On the other hand, the content of 9th-grade political course involves lots of abstract concepts and theories, such as national system, law, civil rights, and obligations, etc., which are difficult for students to understand, lack interest in learning and pay no attention to the learning process. Therefore, the inquiry method (5E) teaching combines the theory and teaching practice of the political course, and caters to the cognitive law and thinking development law of the 9th-grade students.

The inquiry method can allow students to form self-experience and self-perception of knowledge through active participation, independent learning, and cooperative discussion, and cultivate students' innovative spirit and practical ability (Pubu, 2013). Students develop strong curiosity through various forms of inquiry-based activities to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and foster emotional learning experiences (Xu, 2018). The inquiry method is important for students to make decisions or find answers related to their guidance. In finding answers to problems, students need to use their thinking skills to find relevant evidence to conclude. (Ganesan, Balakrishnan, Khairi, Baskaran, & Manimara, 2020). Therefore, the inquiry method (5E) teaching combines the theory and teaching practice of the political course, and caters to the cognitive law and thinking development

law of the 9th grade students. The application of inquiry method (5E) can effectively solve the problems existing in the current 9th grade political course.

In addition, the overall teaching concept of the inquiry method fits well with the new curriculum reform, indicating that the future inquiry method will inevitably play an important role in the educational development of junior high school political course (Yang, 2019). On the one hand, it can break the constraints of the traditional education model and improve the teaching theory of political course. On the other hand, it can not only help students master the knowledge and basic abilities of political course, such as the ability to acquire, collect, process, and use information, and practical ability, but also stimulate students' interest and fully realize the educational function of junior high school political course.

At present, the research on inquiry method in junior high school political course is relatively small compared with other subjects. The existing application of inquiry method in political teaching in junior high schools, such as Sun (2018), Wang (2018), Wang (2019), Zhang (2020), etc. These studies point out the problems existing in the teaching process of the inquiry method, and put forward the methods to solve the problems, but most of them are theoretical researches which are not comprehensive enough. Grade 9 is the last academic year of junior high school, and it is necessary to periodically help students review for the senior high school entrance examination, which cannot provide a long-term and continuous environment for immersion teaching. To sum up, the teaching of inquiry method (5E) can play its role to the maximum extent in the 9th grade political course, improve the teaching effect, and better achieve the teaching goals.

From the mention above, the researcher believes that the inquiry method (5E) could improve the learning achievement to the students. So that, the researcher designs the inquiry method into 5 steps for teaching 1) Engagement 2) Exploration 3) Explanation 4) Elaboration and 5) Evaluation aimed to improve the learning achievement and their satisfaction of 9th grade students in a Chinese public school of the political course. The use of inquiry method can also further increase the effectiveness of other learning and create more engaging and effective learning environment. The objectives of research were 1) to compare grade 9 Chinese students' learning achievement in political course before and after using the inquiry method and 2) to explore grade 9 Chinese students' satisfaction in political course towards the inquiry method.

## **Research methodology**

This study used mixed research methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, in accordance with the research objectives and research questions. The researchers collected data from the achievement test (pretest and posttest) to compare grade 9 Chinese students' learning achievement in political course before and after using the inquiry method and collected data from students' satisfaction questionnaire and semi-structured interview to explore grade 9 Chinese students' satisfaction in political course towards the inquiry method. The achievement test and students' satisfaction questionnaires for quantitative data, and semi-structured interview for qualitative data were used.

**Research Participants:** The target population included 9 classes of grade 9 with a total of 405 students in a public school in China. The researcher used a cluster random sampling to select a class from the school that mixed-ability to form an experimental class included 30 students in the experimental class. They were between 14 and 16 years old, and their

gender and ability to study political course were different. All research participants were approached and informed about the study.

**Research Design:** A mixed approach was adopted in this study, quantitative and qualitative research. The achievement tests and questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. The achievement tests included pre-test and post-test. These two tests were given to the students separately before and after the application of inquiry method to 30 investigate students' achievement. The students' satisfaction questionnaires were collected the quantitative data after the teaching process and semi-structured interviews were used to supported the qualitative data of students' satisfaction.

**Research Instruments:** In this study, the researcher used lesson plans, the achievement test (pre-test and post-test), students' satisfaction questionnaire, and semi-structured interview to collect data. These research instruments were checked using the Item Objective Congruence (IOC) index, which ranges from -1 to +1. A rating of +1 indicates alignment with learning objectives, while a rating of 0 indicates neutrality or uncertainty. A rating of -1 indicates items do not meet objectives. The accuracy and acceptability of the test item value were between 0.67 and 1.00. In this study, the IOC (Index of Consistency) results for the lesson plan, the achievement test, student satisfaction questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews outline were 1, 0.94, 1 and 1. All instruments were validated by three experienced experts with the score which was higher than 0.67. As a result, it demonstrated that all the instruments used in this study were congruent and valid. In addition, the researcher used the Kuder-Richardson (KR-20) to evaluate 30 students the reliability of the achievement test, and Cronbach's Alpha will use to test the reliability of the students' satisfaction questionnaire. The reliability of the achievement test and students' satisfaction questionnaire were 0.77 and 0.98 with the score which was higher than 0.7, indicating the tests meet statistical reliability standards. Therefore, the test items were confirmed as reliable for use in data collection.

**Lesson Plans:** The researcher prepared four lesson plans based on 9th grade textbooks, included 1) participate in the life of a democracy 2) build a home for life together 3) open and interactive world and 4) seek common interests and common development. The researcher conducted one lesson plan per week, each lasting 90 minutes, for a total of four weeks. Each lesson plan used the five steps of the inquiry method for teaching. The details of steps were 1) Engagement: Before the inquiry, teachers can use multimedia courseware to show students pictures, videos, etc. related to the teaching content for students to watch, triggering emotional experiences, mobilizing students' initiative and enthusiasm for participation. 2) Exploration: During the inquiry process, a series of targeted questions are purposefully raised according to the teaching content, forming a hypothesis about questions in the cognitive thinking that students have formed, and then asking students to formulate a group inquiry plan to verify it. 3) Explanation: Students first explain their hypothesis about the inquiry question, after consulting relevant materials and textbooks, think and discuss again, explain the rationality and practicality of the solution to the problem. At the same time, teachers promote students' inquiry process through assistance and guidance. 4) Elaboration: The group obtains the results of the inquiry through the analysis of the inquiry questions, and the representative of the group orally share the inquiry results in the whole class. 5) Evaluation: Students and teachers can supplement or refute based on the conclusions they share, and objectively evaluate students' performance in the inquiry. Moreover the teacher shows the exercises for the current class, allowing students to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the class, analyze and solve problems.

**The Achievement Test (Pretest and Posttest):** The test content was developed by the researchers based on the four topics of lesson plans. The achievement tests were separated into 3 parts. Part 1 multiple choice questions, each question has 4 choices, there are 20 questions and 1 point each, a total of 20 points. Part 2 short answer questions, there are 5 questions and 2 points each, a total of 10 points. Part 3 material analysis questions, there are 5 questions and 2 points each, a total of 10 points. Therefore, the achievement test format includes a total of 20 multiple choice questions, 5 short answer questions and 5 material analysis questions. Each test lasts 90 minutes and the total score is 40 marks.

**Students' Satisfaction Questionnaire:** A five-point Likert scale students' satisfaction questionnaire was created to investigate students' satisfaction toward the inquiry method in politics course. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items divided into three parts, Part A: Interest and motivation, Part B: Engagement, and Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 participants in the study. The mean score ranges were interpreted as follows: Lowest (1.00), Low (1.01–2.00), Moderate (2.01–3.00), High (3.01–4.00), and Highest (4.01–5.00).

**Semi-Structured Interview:** Additionally, semi-structured interviews were designed to elicit more detailed information from participants. After the application of inquiry method teaching. The researcher used a simple random sampling of students, 2 students per group, from 3 groups, namely the higher score, medium score and lower score to conduct semi-structured interviews. It also consisted of three parts: Part A: Interest and motivation, Part B: Engagement, and Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning. Two questions were set in each part, with a total of six questions.

**Data Collection:** To conduct the study, firstly, the researcher obtained approval from the authorities of the middle School. Secondly, for ethical considerations, 30 students were approached and informed about the study. Then, the consent form was signed to participate in the study. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were ensured. Thirdly, the researcher administered a pretest to study and analyze the learning achievement of students before teaching. After that, four weeks of experimental teaching was conducted with using inquiry method following the lesson plans. A posttest was then administered and a questionnaire was handed out for students to complete to assess the students' satisfaction. Finally, the semi-structured interview was held to support the students' satisfaction with the use of inquiry method in political course.

**Data Analysis:** To the first research question "Would there be any improvement of grade 9 Chinese students' learning achievement in political course after the application of inquiry method?", the overall scores from the achievement tests (pretest and posttest) were subjected to paired sample t-tests (t-tests for dependent samples) using statistical analysis, which included calculating the mean and standard deviation (SD) through computer software. To the second research question "What would be grade 9 Chinese students' satisfaction in political course towards the inquiry method?", data collected from the students' satisfaction questionnaires were analyzed using the program to determine the mean and standard deviation. The overall mean score for each component was interpreted based on five levels of satisfaction. Additionally, responses from semi-structured interviews were recorded, translated, and used thematic analysis to interpret and analyze to obtain further insights.

## **Research results**

This study was conducted with grade 9 Chinese students in political course to enhance their learning achievement using inquiry method. The objectives were to compare

grade 9 Chinese students' learning achievement in political course before and after using the inquiry method and to further explore their satisfaction. The lesson plans were completed for once a week of a total of four weeks with the thirty participants. The quantitative data were collected from pretest, posttest and students' satisfaction questionnaire, while qualitative data were gathered from semi-structured interview.

**Analysis of Achievement Test:** To compare grade 9 Chinese students' learning achievement in political course before and after using the inquiry method, the data collected from the political achievement test (pretest and posttest) were analyzed using a paired sample t-test based on the mean, standard deviation, and significance (p) value. Figure 1 below illustrates the improvements of individual students in pretest and posttest scores among the thirty research participants. The full score of achievement test was 40, the blue bars represent pretest scores, while the orange bars represent posttest scores. The posttest scores of all participants increased, suggesting the effectiveness of using inquiry method to enhance students' learning achievement in political course.

In addition, Table 1 below shows that the posttest mean score was greater than the pretest mean score. The pretest mean was 27.10, with a standard deviation of 3.51, while the posttest mean was 37.90, with a standard deviation of 2.58. The posttest mean score was 10.80 points higher than the pretest mean score. The mean score increase from 67.75% to 94.75% of the total score. As a result, each individual participant made an improvement and scored higher on the posttest. Furthermore, the obtained significant (p) value was .001 less than .05 ( $p < .05$ ), showing that the sample group improved significantly on the posttest. As a result, it is possible to conclude that the use of inquiry method was effective in enhancing students' learning achievement in political course.

Table 1: Paired sample statistics of the pretest and posttest

| Group                  | Pretest |      | Posttest |      | Mean difference | t       | p-value |
|------------------------|---------|------|----------|------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| Participants<br>(n=30) | M       | SD   | M        | SD   | 10.80           | 22.26** | .001    |
|                        | 27.10   | 3.51 | 37.90    | 2.58 |                 |         |         |

**Analysis of Students' Satisfaction Questionnaire:** The students' satisfaction questionnaire comprised 15 items which were divided into three parts, Part A: Interest and motivation, Part B: Engagement, and Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning. These were used to investigate students' satisfaction towards the use of inquiry method. The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed using the SPSS program to determine the mean and standard deviation. The mean score of each item and each part was interpreted as follows: 1.00 as the lowest level, 1.01–2.00 as a low level, 2.01–3.00 as a moderate level, 3.01–4.00 as a high level, 4.01–5.00 as the highest level

The mean, SD, and levels of satisfaction for each item and the overall satisfaction of the three parts obtained through the study were showed Table 2 below. It was found that for part A, the mean score of satisfaction were ranked item 5, item 1, item 4, item 3, and item 2 from the highest to lowest. The participants rated item 5 "The methodology of inquiry method could motivate me to learn the politics course." as the highest with a mean score of 4.47 (SD = 0.90). Although item 2, I enjoy the classroom atmosphere when using the inquiry method, was the lowest mean score (M= 4.23), it is still at a highest level. For part B, the mean score of satisfaction item 8 and item 10 were the highest, followed by item 7 and item 9, item 6 was the lowest. The participants rated item 8 and 10 "The inquiry method could have more opportunity to interact to each other in the class and the

steps of the inquiry method give me to explore more knowledge." as the highest with a mean score of 4.43 (item 8 SD = 0.97, item 10 SD = 0.90). Although item 6, The activities engaged me in learning politics course, was the lowest mean score (M = 4.27), it is still at a highest level. For part C, the mean score of satisfaction item 12 was the highest, followed by item 11 and item 13, item 14 and 15 were the lowest. The participants rated item 12, "The inquiry method could greatly reduce my burden of memorizing the key knowledge of political course." was rated as the highest with a mean score of 4.43 (SD = 0.90). Although item 14 and 15, The inquiry method could improve my ability of analyze and solve the problems and using inquiry method could enable me to deeper understanding the content of the topic, were the lowest mean score (M = 4.37), it is still at a highest level.

Table 2: The mean and standard deviation of students' satisfaction questionnaire

| No.                                                    | Items                                                                                                  | M    | SD   | Interpretation |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|----------------|
| Part A- Interest & Motivation                          |                                                                                                        |      |      |                |
| 1                                                      | Using inquiry method to learn politics course is interesting.                                          | 4.40 | 0.72 | Highest        |
| 2                                                      | I enjoy the classroom atmosphere when using the inquiry method.                                        | 4.23 | 0.94 | Highest        |
| 3                                                      | Using the inquiry method helps me to develop my confidence in learning.                                | 4.30 | 0.88 | Highest        |
| 4                                                      | The teacher well organized for teaching with the inquiry method.                                       | 4.37 | 0.93 | Highest        |
| 5                                                      | The methodology of inquiry method could motivate me to learn the politics course.                      | 4.47 | 0.90 | Highest        |
| Part B- Engagement                                     |                                                                                                        |      |      |                |
| 6                                                      | The activities engaged me in learning politics course.                                                 | 4.27 | 1.08 | Highest        |
| 7                                                      | I am more willing to engage in the resources provided by the teacher.                                  | 4.37 | 1.07 | Highest        |
| 8                                                      | The inquiry method could have more opportunity to interact to each other in the class.                 | 4.43 | 0.97 | Highest        |
| 9                                                      | I am willing to apply the inquiry method to learn in other topics.                                     | 4.37 | 1.00 | Highest        |
| 10                                                     | The steps of the inquiry method give me to explore more knowledge.                                     | 4.43 | 0.90 | Highest        |
| Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning |                                                                                                        |      |      |                |
| 11                                                     | The inquiry method helped me to improve in learning achievement.                                       | 4.40 | 0.89 | Highest        |
| 12                                                     | The inquiry method could greatly reduce my burden of memorizing the key knowledge of political course. | 4.43 | 0.90 | Highest        |
| 13                                                     | The strategies of inquiry teaching method effective in learning.                                       | 4.40 | 0.89 | Highest        |
| 14                                                     | The inquiry method could improve my ability of analyze and solve the problems.                         | 4.37 | 0.93 | Highest        |
| 15                                                     | Using inquiry method could enable me to deeper understanding the content of the topic.                 | 4.37 | 0.93 | Highest        |

In addition, Table 3 below shows that the overall rating of the mean score for each part was highest, respectively, as follows: Part A: Interest and Motivation was 4.35 (SD = 0.87) which indicated the highest level. Part B: engagement was 4.37 (SD = 1.00) which indicated the highest level. For part C: efficacy of inquiry method on student learning was 4.39 (SD = 0.91) which indicated the highest level. The result showed that students had positive satisfaction with the use of inquiry method.

Table 3: The mean score for each part

| Item   | n  | M    | Interpretation |
|--------|----|------|----------------|
| Part A | 30 | 4.35 | Highest        |
| Part B | 30 | 4.37 | Highest        |
| Part C | 30 | 4.39 | Highest        |
| Total  | 30 | 4.37 | Highest        |

Analysis of semi-structured interview: After using inquiry method teaching in political course, the researcher used a simple random sampling to selected 6 students from the 30 participants for interviews. The 6 students were divided into three groups, 2 students per group, namely the higher score, medium score and lower score to conduct semi-structured interviews. The participants voluntarily answered six questions through semi-structured interviews, and the researcher analyzed the collected responses under three themes: Part A: Interest and motivation, Part B: Engagement, and Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning. A comprehensive analysis of each group is provided below.

#### 1) Part A: Interest and motivation

Based on the feedback received from the students, it can be stated that they were satisfied with the use of the inquiry method for learning political course. Most of the participants found it interesting and motivating to learn political course through this method. They also mentioned that the learning materials and activity processes provided by the researcher were helpful, incorporated information relevant to their lives, and enabled them to learn Politics effectively and be more motivated to learn. The following student responses support these views:

" The videos and pictures played by multimedia are all related to our lives, making political knowledge more concrete." and "I was able to get preliminary answers to my research questions by thinking and looking up relevant information." (Student 1 and 2, the higher score group).

" The inquiry activities and group discussions in political class made the learning process very interesting." and "The steps of the inquiry method were very reasonable. I was able to complete the class inquiry tasks under the guidance of the teacher, which strengthened my confidence in inquiry." (Student 12 and 18, the medium score group).

" I liked to inquiry, and discussing with other students made me active." and "using inquiry made my politics class less boring." (Student 27 and 30, the lower score group).

#### 2) Part B: Engagement

The majority of the students have reported that the teaching steps of inquiry method were relevant to political course and the activities designed according to the inquiry method were highly engaging and have aided them greatly in learning political

course. They also expressed their eagerness to continue participating in these classroom activities, as they believe this could improve their learning thinking, more active participation in classroom activities. The following student responses support these views:

"The inquiry method gave me more opportunities to participate in class and express my ideas." and "I was able to understand my shortcomings through mutual evaluation and then improve myself." (Student 1 and 2, the higher score group).

"Inquiry made me more willing to participate in learning. I hope that teachers in other courses can use inquiry teaching." and "The exploration activities were very interesting. I was able to participate with the teacher and classmates, which made me pay more attention to the class." (Student 12 and 18, the medium score group).

"I was willing to follow the teacher's inquiry steps to learn. Under the teacher's guidance, I remained free and my thinking was active." and "I was willing to discuss with my classmates in the group and I felt relaxed." (Student 27 and 30, the lower score group).

### 3) Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning

The majority of students found the implementation of the inquiry method teaching pedagogy to be beneficial and productive. Utilizing the inquiry method teaching led to an improvement in their ability to analyze and solve problems, understanding and memory of knowledge, and the achievement test in political course. The following student responses support this view:

"During the inquiry and discussion, I was able to combine the knowledge I had learned before to discover problems, solve problems, and then understand new knowledge." and "The inquiry method helped me better analyze and solve inquiry problems." (Student 1 and 2, the higher score group).

"In the process of solving inquiry problems, my memory of knowledge was deepened." and "Learning using the inquiry method has enhanced my learning ability." (Student 12 and 18, the medium score group).

"In the classroom using the inquiry method, I found that my ability to understand the problem has improved" and "After using the inquiry method, my political achievements have improved significantly." (Student 27 and 30, the lower score group).

Based on the analyses conducted, it has been found that the students who used inquiry method learning experienced significant improvement in their achievement. The majority of the students reported that the inquiry method not only increased their interest in political course but also enhanced the efficiency of their learning process. In addition, they expressed high levels of satisfaction with the inquiry method. All the data presented here strongly supports the students' satisfaction.

## Discussion

The study found that grade 9 students at a public middle school in the Yunnan province of China improved their learning achievement in political course through the inquiry method methods, and their satisfaction with the inquiry method was positive. They enjoyed learning with inquiry method and expressed a desire to use them in future lessons, as follows:

The results of the test showed that using the inquiry method improved grade 9 students' learning achievement. All 30 participant's mean score of the post-test (37.90) were higher than the pre-test (27.10). In addition, students No.24 and No.28 made the most

remarkable improvement, the percentage difference between the pretest and posttest was 40% and 45%. Although Student No.1 improved by only 8 points, he consistently scored at the top in the pre-test and post-test, showing he already has an excellent learning foundation in political course. On the other hand, Students No.4, No.5, No.7 and No.14 improved by only 7 points, which were the smallest improvement among his classmates. Nonetheless, their scores were still considered above average, indicating that they have the potential for further development. Therefore, using the inquiry method positively impacted political course learning, all findings from the pre-test and post-test were reliable answers to the first research question.

As a result, the inquiry method is an effective tool for learning in political course. Inquiry method designed is in line with students' cognition, the process is also well organized and gives students more time to participate in the inquiry. Inquiry method also encourages students to learn independently, and cultivate their ability to think independently and manage themselves. At the same time, in the process of inquiry, students train their ability to question, analyze and evaluate information, learn how to solve problems systematically, and provides immediate feedback through testing. These have also been proven in previous studies. Wei (2020) also showed that students observe, communicate, predict and verify with questions in the process of participating in inquiry activities, and truly regard the learning process as a process of active exploration. In this process, they can exercise inquiry skills and use inquiry skills to acquire knowledge and solve problems, enhance learning effect. Zhang & Dong (2024) study demonstrate that organizing students to explore is an important point of the inquiry method, giving students space to question and discuss, and ensuring that every student is clear about the problem. Through communication, cooperation, induction and summary, students' understanding and mastery can be promoted, and they can also be guided to solve problems creatively based on independent thinking and the power of their classmates.

The students' satisfaction included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, both of which were divided into three parts: Part A: Interest and Motivation, Part B: Engagement and Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning. The questionnaire consists of 15 items, and a five-point of Likert scale was used to collect quantitative data: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, all 30 (n=30) study participants were given questionnaires. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to analyze the survey results. The average score was lowest at 1.00, low at 1.01 – 2.00, moderate at 2.01 – 3.00, high at 3.01 - 4.00, and highest at 4.01 – 5.00. Standard deviation is most commonly used as a measure of the degree of statistical distribution, reflecting the level of dispersion of the data. The smaller the standard deviation, the more dense the data distribution, and the larger the standard deviation, the more discrete the data distribution. At present, there is no clear limit to how large a standard deviation is (Xu, 2003). In addition, the semi-structured interview consists of six questions, and topic analysis was used to collect qualitative data, six students participated and gave feedback. All participants expressed their satisfaction with the using inquiry method in political course. All findings from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were reliable answers to the second research question, and the results were as follows:

1) The Results of Part A: Interest and Motivation: The results of Part A of the questionnaire showed that the inquiry method positively impacted students' interest and motivation, with a mean score of 4.35 (SD=0.87) indicating the highest level of satisfaction. Item 5, "The methodology of inquiry method could motivate me to learn the politics course" had the highest mean score of 4.47 (SD= 0.90). In addition, the feedback of semi-structured interview showed that the inquiry method was interesting and motivating,

the learning materials and activity processes incorporated information relevant to their lives and enabled them to learn Politics effectively and be more motivated to learn. These results clearly show that the design of the inquiry method greatly enhances the learning enthusiasm of students and makes them feel that the learning process is very interesting. Using materials such as videos, pictures and cases related to life in the inquiry method teaching can stimulate students' interest in learning. Students can understand the relevant inquiry questions more intuitively through these visual materials, making them feel that inquiry is not so difficult. At the same time, students can complete learning tasks through inquiry, which will greatly increase their interest and motivation in learning. These findings are consistent with previous studies. Ding (2024) study demonstrates that abstract and single knowledge can only be taught to students, and it cannot achieve the goal of high-quality teaching. Teachers should create a certain learning space for students, reasonably create learning situations based on relevant question content, and connect knowledge with students' daily life, so as to attract students' attention and lead them to understand the knowledge. And Wang (2024) who also found that the inquiry method uses students' life experiences as reference material. Through the guidance of teacher, students can more easily understand the inquiry questions, thereby stimulating students' interest and enthusiasm in learning.

2) The Results of Part B: Engagement: The results of Part B of the questionnaire showed that the inquiry method successfully increased student engagement. The mean score of 4.37 (SD= 1.00) reflects the highest level of satisfaction, indicating that inquiry method stimulated student participation and significantly increased their overall satisfaction with the learning process. In this part, item 8 and 10 said, "The inquiry method could have more opportunity to interact to each other in the class and the steps of the inquiry method give me to explore more knowledge" received the highest mean score of 4.43 (item 8 SD = 0.97, item 10 SD = 0.90). In addition, the feedback of semi-structured interview showed that the steps of inquiry method were relevant to political course and the activities designed according to the inquiry method were highly engaging, which improved their learning thinking and makes them more actively participate in classroom activities. These results clearly show that reasonable inquiry steps and classroom interaction are critical to motivating student engagement. The inquiry method is designed based on the textbooks of political courses, emphasizing the active participation of students. In each link of the inquiry, teachers leave enough time for them to explore on their own. In this process, students have more opportunities to cooperate and discuss problems with classmates and teachers, constantly improve their thinking, and enable them to participate in classroom activities more actively. These findings are consistent with previous studies. Wang (2015) who found that that the design of inquiry method should be based on student inquiry, linking the course content with students' individual experience, and guiding students to think about problems that often occur in life. At the same time, with the encouragement of teachers, every student has the opportunity to fully participate. They through active participation, independent learning, and cooperative discussion, they can achieve self-experience and understanding of knowledge. Li (2021) who also believed that the steps of inquiry method can stimulate students' curiosity, improve classroom participation, and cultivate students' higher-order thinking ability. And Han (2022) found that through the inquiry method, students can conduct group cooperative inquiry in class, discuss problems freely, learn in a relaxed classroom atmosphere, which can effectively improve students' learning efficiency.

3) The Results of Part C: Efficacy of inquiry method on student learning: The results of Part C of the questionnaire showed that he inquiry method successfully improved

students' efficacy development in political course. The mean score of 4.39 (SD= 0.91) with the highest level of satisfaction, indicates that learners generally regarded the inquiry method as an efficient learning tool. Item 12 in the questionnaire, "The inquiry method could greatly reduce my burden of memorizing the key knowledge of political course" received a mean score of 4.43 (SD= 0.90). In addition, the feedback of semi-structured interview showed that the inquiry method improved their ability of analyze and solve problems, understanding and memory of knowledge, and the achievement test in political course. These results clearly show that inquiry method is particularly effective in helping students remember political course knowledge. The inquiry method encourages students to actively think and discover problems. In the process of finding answers and analyzing and discussing, students can have a deeper understanding of the concepts and principles of political courses and build new knowledge based on existing knowledge, rather than just mechanical memorization, which is essential for practical learning application. In addition, through repeated questioning and explanation, students' ability to analyze and solve problems is enhanced. These findings are consistent with previous studies. Wang (2024) who found that through inquiry, students have the ability to analyze problems independently and propose solutions. In addition, the inquiry method combines the knowledge learned with practical problems through activities such as solving problems and explaining doubts, thereby enhancing the understanding and mastery of knowledge and improving grades. And Sha (2024) who found that using the inquiry method of teaching, students think and explore answers with questions, and then perceive, understand or construct knowledge in the process of discovering and analyzing problems. The inquiry method enables students to become active participants in classroom teaching, verifying and deepening their understanding of problems in the process of participation, which can not only effectively cultivate students' ability to observe, analyze and solve problems, but also improve learning effects.

## Conclusion

According to the findings of the political achievement test, the students' satisfaction questionnaire and the semi-structured interview, it is possible to conclude that inquiry method plays a key role in enhancing learning achievement of grade 9 Chinese students in political course. The results of the achievement test (pretest and posttest) showed that grade 9 Chinese students enhanced their learning achievement in political course after the implementation of the inquiry method. The responses from both the students' satisfaction questionnaire and the semi-structured interview indicated positive satisfaction towards inquiry method. It is clearly shown that inquiry method is an effective method for enhancing students' learning achievement. It made the learning interest and motivation were enhanced with highest level and most of the participants found it interesting and motivating to learn political course through this method, the learning materials and activity processes provided by the researcher were helpful, incorporated information relevant to their lives, and enabled them to learn politics effectively and be more motivated to learn. Moreover, it increases students' engagement with highest level, the teaching steps of inquiry method were relevant to political course and the activities designed according to the inquiry method were highly engaging and have aided them greatly in learning political course. They also expressed their eagerness to continue participating in these classroom activities, as they believe this could improve their learning thinking, more active participation in classroom activities. Lastly, it has helped students improve their learning efficacy with highest level.

Utilizing the inquiry method teaching led to an improvement in their ability to analyze and solve problems, understanding and memory of knowledge, and the achievement test in political course. In conclusion, the findings affirm the use of inquiry method has a positive impact on students' political course learning. The inquiry method is very effective in improving students' learning interest, class participation, knowledge memory and problem solving. This teaching method has proven to be an excellent tool for political teachers and students in China. Although the inquiry method is effective for learning achievement in political course, it is important to maintain classroom order. It is recommended that political teachers grasp the time for inquiry, pay attention to the status and needs of students during the inquiry process, and thoughtful incorporation of inquiry method can support instructional goals. Looking ahead, similar studies could be conducted using a larger sample size, students in different grades, and schools in different locations in China, fostering a supportive environment, which would help to to evaluate learning strategies in different contexts.

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