



Is the teaching at schools that write the IEB examination adapted to ensure learners are appropriately prepared to write the IEB examination?

Yes. The way questions are asked in an examination impacts directly on how teachers approach the teaching of the concepts in the classroom.

All learners who pass the IEB examination qualify for further study. Understandably then, the IEB focuses its assessment on the kinds of skills and conceptual understanding that are required for success in further study. Hence teachers, in preparing learners for this examination, are directed to teach the skills and the conceptual understanding specific to and inherent in a discipline. This is done in such a way that learners are equipped to deal with questions that really probe their depth of understanding. Teachers do not spend hours and hours of teaching time giving learners "drill and practice" exercises from various textbooks, knowing that if they do enough examples, they will expose learners to questions that will appear in an examination paper. That process does not develop problem-solving ability.

Problem-solving questions are questions that a learner has not seen before and therefore must have the required conceptual understanding in order to answer them properly, as well as the problem-solving strategies and attitudes necessary to tackle the 'unrehearsed question'. It is these skills that prepare learners for success at university.

IEB examiners are required to develop original questions, i.e. questions that will not be found in a textbook. In preparing learners for such an examination, teachers must not only ensure their charges have the requisite discipline knowledge and understanding; they must introduce the learners to problem-solving strategies in the earlier grades and give them the opportunity to develop the necessary soft skills for success i.e. perseverance, persistence, trying new approaches, testing solutions and most of all, never losing confidence in their own ability. These attitudes obviously are also life skills, critical for success in the world of work.

It is worth recalling Martin Luther King's observation: The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

In schooling, learners must be challenged to prepare them to use problem-solving strategies appropriately and develop the attitudes necessary for success in life.