Traveling Trunks: Enrich Curriculum with a Global Perspective

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Traveling Trunks: Enrich Curriculum with a Global Perspective

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Abstract

Traveling trunks as a delivery method for curricula have been associated with experiential learning and shown to increase learning (George, 2010; Shepherd, 2007; Lett, 1993). Students learn through real-life experiences, such as global social issues (Kister, 1992), and principal to the nature of learning is the relationship between experience and learning, a shaping force in the development of thoughtful, curious students (Loughran, 2006).

The embedded mixed method study showed learning gains occurred when experiential curriculum was facilitated by experienced teachers, and delivered in a traveling trunk. The study (N=58) showed that active learning about social issues engages students. Paired t-tests revealed a significant difference in learning for the experimental group. Qualitative findings suggest an enriched learning experience with benefits including student interest and curiosity, prepackaged curricula, development of process skills, and the topic of a global social issue.

This research adds to the body of knowledge in three areas: experiential learning, teacher facilitation of learning, use of social issues and resulted in the creation of Global Fusion Educational Resources™2009 to provide curriculum delivered in traveling trunks.

Methods

Research Design: Embedded Mixed Methods

Conducted in six FCS classrooms in West Texas, where three experimental groups received the curriculum in each of the three schools, delivered in a traveling trunk while the other three control groups received the curriculum without the trunk. The quantitative strand included the global hunger assessment pre/post instrument to examine learning differences. The qualitative data, and its possible relationship to the learning process was the focus of the analysis as the embedded component.

Table 3.1. Student Sample by Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Experimental (n = 34)</th>
<th>Control (n = 24)</th>
<th>Students (N=58)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Data Collection and Analysis Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are there gains in learning outcomes among the students who experience the trunk delivery of curriculum about global hunger, when compared with students receiving the curriculum without the trunk?</td>
<td>Global Hunger Assessment</td>
<td>T-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. From the perspective of the participants, how does the experience with the trunk delivery enrich aspects of learning, e.g. feelings of active learning, Teacher/student interactions and relationships, and motivation to take action on the social issue?</td>
<td>Classroom observation Teacher Interviews</td>
<td>Emergent descriptive themes were identified and categorized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do the qualitative outcomes explain the quasi-experimental results?</td>
<td>Classroom observations Teacher Interviews</td>
<td>Emergent themes from qualitative data sources were integrated with quantitative results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

The mixed methods embedded study conducted revealed that gains in learning about global hunger (p < .05) occurred when teachers facilitate learning using the curriculum delivered in the traveling trunk. Post test scores increased for both the control group and the experimental group, but the differences for the control group were not significant. The qualitative results support the increases in learning and indicate the curriculum experience enriched learning. Field notes from classroom observations and teacher interviews included positive comments and benefits associated with the integration of the experiential curriculum in the classroom including suggestions for improvements for teacher preparation and implementation of the curriculum.

Results reinforce identified enriched aspects of learning associated with the trunk delivery and curriculum about a social issue:

- Student excitement and curiosity
- Engaged student learning
- Positive attitudes
- Topic of a social issue
- Active learning
- Standards built into the lessons
- Technology components

Build student process skills such as critical thinking and problem solving

Literature Review

Little research has been conducted on the traveling trunk delivery method and its connection to learning. The studies available suggest that the trunk delivery does positively impact students’ learning and that teachers would use the prepackaged education resource. A curriculum that combines practical problem solving and experiential learning introduced a traveling trunk could be a valuable new tool for educators.

Evidence emerged indicating an increase in the use of traveling trunks has not clearly determined if the delivery method is associated with learning. Therefore, the study specifically addressed the utilization of the traveling trunk in FCS classrooms to determine how the trunk influenced learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if an experiential curriculum about a social issue delivered in a traveling trunk through teacher facilitation, incorporating technology, improved student learning. Limited examination of traveling trunks has not clearly determined if the delivery method is associated with learning. Therefore, the study specifically addressed the utilization of the traveling trunk in FCS classrooms to determine how the trunk influenced learning.

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References
