

Integration of Information Literacy into Elementary History Teaching: A Framework of Big6™ Model

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Editor's note: We are lucky enough to have the first look at some exciting Big6 research conducted by our colleagues in Taiwan. Enjoy!

This research was conducted at an elementary school in Taiwan, with an enrollment of up to 900 students aged 7 to 12. Along with two fifth-grade teachers, we collaboratively planned an integrated information literacy curriculum and evaluated its effectiveness. This integrated curriculum was designed based on the Big6 model.

Our research focused on 33 students in the fifth-grade class. Ms. Chang, the main collaborative teacher in this study, has taught for five years in this school, and is studying for a master's degree in history. The media specialist, Ms. Shen, who was another collaborative teacher, was responsible for teaching information literacy courses.

Research Purposes

The purpose of this study was to develop and evaluate an integrated information literacy curriculum in history based on the Big6 instructional model. Specific purposes related to the information problems are as follows:

1. To develop an integrated information literacy curriculum in history instruction using digital archives.
2. To investigate student's performance of learning Taiwanese history in the integrated curriculum.

Research Process

This project was comprised of two stages. Each stage is explained in more detail below; in short, they were:

1. Stage of Preparation

After several discussions, the researchers, Ms. Chang and Ms. Shen selected the unit of Taiwanese History in the social studies textbook as the curricular topic in which to integrate information literacy. To familiarize students with Big6, the researchers and collaborative teachers designed a basic inquiry project on Native Taiwanese. Students in groups selected an interesting topic for exploration based on the Big6 model.

2. Stage of Collaborative Action

After students' inquiry skills and confidence was reinforced through the basic Big6 lesson, they embarked on an action project, called *Telling a Story from an Old Picture*. First of all, Ms. Chang told students the value of a picture that could reestablish *one's own* history; then she introduced students to the digital archives, called [Taiwan Memory Digital Photo Museum](#). This website makes available 30,000 old pictures of Taiwan.

Once students found a picture that related to their family (from the website or from some other source), they learned how to tell a story from a picture by interviewing people who knew about the

picture's subject. First, the four teachers guided students to formulate related interview questions based on the directions of their inquiry. After interviewing their selected person, students synthesized the interview notes into an interesting story that they presented with the picture on a poster. Each student presented the poster to their peers and answered questions. Finally, according to a chronological timeline, all posters were put in historical order to create a display entitled *Walking through the Timeline*. In this way, students created a display that allowed them to thoroughly understand the change of history in Taiwan through the stories of people who lived through that change.

Research Results

The Integrated Information Literacy Curriculum in History Teaching

The purpose for fifth grade students to study Taiwanese History is to understand the evolution of Taiwanese history from the aboriginal era to the present democratic era. In our Stage of Preparation, students formed groups to investigate simple topics (e.g. building, clothing, customs) concerning the native people. Naturally, we instructed them to use Big6 as they approached this information problem.

During the inquiry process, Ms. Chang and Ms. Shen cooperatively facilitated students to construct a concept map about the chosen topic, then brainstorm information seeking strategies and physically locate the needed information. Next, students read the gathered information and put the most suitable information together. Finally, each group presented their findings to their peers in the form of role-playing, PowerPoint slides, and Chinese comic dialogue, and so forth. Ms. Chang was pleased with students' various styles of presentation, but she did find that their information seeking skills were not yet effective.

As a result, the researchers and two collaborative teachers designed a project of *Telling a Story from an Old Picture*. In this assignment, students interviewed primary sources of information and used other related information sources. They were then to use this information to write a 200-word story about a photograph of older members of their families.

After choosing a picture, students formulated interview questions according to 5W1H (when, why, who, where, what, and how), in order to have an interview with their family members. Writing the questions required students to think about the kinds of information they needed to collect in order to write their story. When writing the story, students may write it in a chronological or an event-oriented way. There were several children who had difficulty finding family members' photographs, but we approached this as another information problem to solve. Teachers guided these students to use related books or websites to locate useful pictures.

In terms of Synthesis, each student created a visual display by putting the story and photograph together on a piece of construction paper with needed decoration. They then presented this visual display to the rest of the class while they made an oral presentation. After the presentation, students thought over the relationship between the photographs and the contents of textbook, and reflected upon the whole inquiry process for improvement (Evaluation - Big6 #6). You can see a concise version of the [action plan for the integrated curriculum](#).

On the whole, 25 of the 32 fifth graders stated in the questionnaire they liked this integrated curriculum. Some of their reasons were collected as the following:

"I like the process, so I can know more about my father's past."

"It lets me know more about food, clothing, living, transportation of the past Taiwan."

"I learn lots of things I didn't know before, such as children's clothing being made of adult's used clothes. What a pity!"

"It is more enjoyable than learning from textbooks only. And I know more things."

The other 7 students showed their negative feelings toward this curriculum. The following quotes were their reasons:

"It took me too much time."

"I felt embarrassed and scared when I told my story to the full classes."

"It's a lot of trouble to find an old picture."

"Most of the stories told were not clear and unimpressive, so I didn't think they could supplement the contents of textbooks."

As the comments above illustrated, most of the children had positive reactions toward the integrated information literacy curriculum. The children shared the stories with each other while learning different facets of Taiwanese history. On the other hand, the reasons for disliking this curriculum could be grouped into two: lack of motivation to learn, and poor presentation skills. Actually, both Ms. Chang and Ms. Shen observed the situations, *"We have to remind the students what kind of questions could be asked regarding the picture they brought to the classroom. They are so lazy, and don't want to do anything. I have to push, push, push..."*, *"When the students are getting older, their enthusiasm and devotion are getting weaker. I have to do my best to make them want to learn."* Thus, there needs to be further investigation and study about how to encourage students to develop inquiry learning competences and positive attitudes.

Furthermore, as for poor presentation skills, complaints from the interview with students illustrated that *"I don't understand what my classmates are talking about with the picture, because they speak a word and swallow the next. Anyhow, I find the answers to what I don't understand from the display of Walking through the Timelines."* Ms. Chang also noticed that the students became very nervous when they used the microphone and stood in front of classroom. In fact, a student wrote on the Classroom BBS, *"I think the final presentation is very exciting and wonderful, but when I stand in front of the class, I speak with low voice and am scared to death."* Thus, how to help students overcome the presentation phobia is a task for improving the integrated curriculum.

Student's Performance of Learning Taiwanese History in the Integrated Curriculum

Different from other historical periods of Taiwanese history, students can learn about the country's recent history through their grandparents, parents and other family members' personal life stories. Using the Taiwan Memory Digital Photo Museum as an example, students were encouraged to collect the photographs from their family albums. Then, they asked for the family members shown in the photographs to participate in an in-depth interview. Finally, based on the collected information, students wrote their own historical stories.

The themes of pictures students selected for inquiry were helpful to understand students' interests regarding Taiwanese history. These historical events included the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the police system under the rule of Japanese, the Nationalist government moving to Taiwan after 1949, etc. Also most students were curious about diverse living styles of their ancestors, such as *"Grandpa's Memory"* (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Grandpa's Memory

In addition, students also had concerns regarding some emergent social issues in Taiwan, such as *Interaction between Two Sides of Taiwan Straits*, or *The Mothers of Taiwanese Sons*. All in all, students gained more historical consciousness regarding Taiwanese history through the learning activity integrating meaningful photographs and life stories. They could understand the evolution of living styles among different historical periods. Here is some data collected from their worksheets:

"My grandpa wore the clothes made by his mother. Sometimes, he had second-hand clothes donated from kind and rich relatives. Different from grandpa's time, my father can wear shirts and trousers purchased from the clothing stores. Right now I wear lots of clothes imported from other countries. These clothes even hold the world-brand reputation."

The remarks on the classroom BBS also showed their learning situation, *"I learned a lot of historical stories," "After visiting the Walking through the Timeline display, I know how our grandparents lived. I even know my classmates' grandparents' experiences."*

Conclusion & Implications

The results of this study indicated that most students had positive reactions toward the history education that incorporated digital archives into teaching based on the Big6 model. The lack of assertive inquiry attitudes and presentation skills are two problems that need to be overcome. As Jeanne Galvin reported, information literacy skills should be frequently learned and practiced at the point of needs (Galvin, 2005). Thus, it is evident that teachers should provide students with more research projects or assignments based on the Big6 model, so that students can become information literate. As for students' performance of learning Taiwanese history, students had more historical consciousness through the use of meaningful photographs.

References

Galvin, J. (2005). Alternative strategies for promoting information literacy. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 31(4), 352-357.