

Evaluating the Efficacy of Animated Narratives in Teaching Chinese History: A Mixed-Methods Study on Historical Literacy and Empathy among Primary Students in Hong Kong

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Abstract

As digital media continues to shape pedagogical strategies, the incorporation of high-quality animation into history education has emerged as a pivotal means of enhancing student engagement. This investigation evaluates the efficacy of the animated series “The Animated Chinese History for the Curious Minds” as a transformative pedagogical instrument within the Hong Kong Primary General Studies curriculum. Anchored in Cognitive Load Theory and Mayer’s Multimedia Learning Theory, the study explores how the integration of visual and auditory stimuli optimizes cognitive resource management and promotes more profound, immersive engagement with historical narratives. Employing a mixed-method sequential explanatory research design, the research consolidates data from 251 Primary Five students across four schools, supplemented by focused group interviews. Quantitative results demonstrate strong consensus regarding the effectiveness of animation: 85.3% of participants regard it as an effective learning medium, while 84.4% report notable gains in historical and scientific understanding. Significantly, 82.1% of students exhibit measurable levels of historical empathy, reflecting an increased capacity to contextualize the challenges and perspectives of historical figures. Qualitative data further corroborate these findings, with students noting that the animated and visually engaging portrayals of historical figures reduce learning barriers, thereby enhancing motivation and capacity to empathetically “walk in the shoes” of past actors. Comparative analysis indicates a marked preference for animated instruction relative to traditional approaches, with participants finding the multimedia format more comprehensible and engaging. This research advances the discourse on multimedia pedagogy by illustrating that carefully designed animated series can serve as an effective bridge between abstract historical facts and emotional engagement, ultimately fostering a more nuanced understanding of Chinese history among young learners.

Keywords

History Education, Animation, Historical Empathy, Mixed-method Sequential Explanatory Research Design, Cognitive Load Theory, Primary Education.