



A study of the Effectiveness of Teaching through Comic Strips on History Academic Achievement and Interest of Upper Primary Students

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ABSTRACT

The literature survey shows that there is an overwhelming acceptance of comic strips among researchers and educational organizations; however this strategy has not been very frequently used in secondary schools. Implementing comic strips is a complex process. The research on comic strips has proposed that the benefits are usually long term rather than having an instant effect. So the study was undertaken. The design for the study was pretest post-test Achievement scores of experimental & control group design. All the 64 students from a school within the Mumbai metropolis constituted the population of the study. One school was randomly selected and made into experimental and control groups. History Achievement Test was prepared by the researchers and validated by two senior History lecturers from the Education Department. The History Achievement Test was administered to the students by the researchers. Data collected were analyzed using t-test statistics. The results indicated that teachers taught history using comic strips instructional methods achieved higher than those taught using traditional lecture-based methods. It was recommended that teachers need to diversify their method of teaching history such as comic strips as it will assist in higher academic achievement of learners.

Keywords: Comic strips, Instructional method, Academic Achievement

INTRODUCTION

As a teacher in the field of History, the researcher is often asked by his students: What is the use or relevance of studying History (the capital letter signaling the academic field of study)? Does it matter to us in the present what happened long ago? The Researcher's response to this pertinent question on the impressionable minds is that 'History is inescapable'. It studies the past and its legacies in the present. Far from being a 'dead' subject, it connects things through time and encourages its students to take a long view of such connections.

The researchers has always believed that when it comes to the different methods of instruction in History subject, the teachers have limitless possibilities that they can use but in most of the cases, it has been observed that they merely use the traditional methods of teaching i.e., the lecture method. The traditional teaching methods focus on the teacher and more often than not, it involves the teacher thoroughly explaining the subject matter with little to no student interaction especially in the current scenario of online education. This may be the most straightforward method but its efficiency is reduced due to the short attention span resulting in the students' loss of interest in the subject and a dip in their achievement levels.

The researchers felt that the progression of teaching methods should follow the dynamic needs of the students in relation to the current times. The traditional teaching methods may have been successful in the past, but as the society is constantly evolving, the minds of the current generation too vary from those of the previous generation. Hence it is the role of educators of History subject to change the classroom environment and makes it more challenging and thought provoking.

There are many ways to demonstrate understanding of History as a subject and it is important to incorporate different teaching techniques to ensure inclusion of all students and for students to receive the best possible learning experience. One way of incorporating different teaching techniques is by using Comic Strips.



Historical Background of the usage of comics in the field of Education

The use of comics in education is based on the concept of creating engagement and motivation for students. Since the birth of modern comics in the 1930's, the effectiveness of comics as an effective means of learning and development has been the subject of debate. Sones (1944) pointed out that those comics "aroused more than a hundred critical articles in Educational and non-professional publications." The use of cartoons in education later attracted the attention of Fredric Wertham, who pointed out that the use of cartoons in education represented "a low point in the history of American science."

It has been found that the use of narrative forms such as comics can "increase students' interest in science", help students remember what they have learned and provide a means to promote discussion. However, it has also been observed that many educators are still "contradictory" about using cartoons as educational tools. Comics are also used as a means to convey health information on topics such as diabetes. In 1978, Pendulum Press published a handbook on the value of comics as an educational tool: Illustrated format: An effective teaching tool (ISBN 0883013487). In the United States, comics in the classroom and the Maryland Comics Initiative can be seen in the use of comics for education through the Internet. Professional development content for teachers on how teachers integrate cartoons in the classroom is available through the California Department of Education Expert Agent website.

Rationale of Study

It takes time and effort to get students to like reading. Fortunately, we have a wealth of resources at our disposal, as well as a diverse selection of reading materials for selective pupils. Introduce students to comics, a media that uses images and text to communicate ideas, as a simple way to get them reading. From beginning readers to advanced readers, there are comics for everyone.

Teachers can use comic books to communicate material in a unique way. Political cartoons could be used by history teachers to clarify and present ideas to students. Political cartoons from the past can be a simple approach to learn about society's opinions and habits during a particular era.

Allowing pupils to create their own comics is another common technique to use comics in the classroom. Allowing pupils to produce their own comic strips or political cartoons on a certain topic has proven to be a success for many teachers.

The pedagogy of using Comic Strips is student-centered and activity-oriented and actively involves students in the meaningful activities offered. This approach provides active, creative, visual and spatial learning activities in hierarchical relationships. Provides the ability to organize, analyze, evaluate, summarize, and redirect ideas.

Many researchers have also found that an educational approach to using Comic Strips improves the thinking skills of all social science students, especially those of higher history. It also provides real-time feedback for both students and teachers. Therefore, Using Comic Strips in teaching History subject can be more effective than traditional instruction in improving students' achievement and interest in History.

The current state of History subject education in schools is primarily due to the following factors: the teacher's lack of historical knowledge, his or her lack of knowledge of world history, religious or social bias, national bias, and a lack of correlation.

After reviewing related researches on the challenges faced during the teaching of History, the researcher discovered that a rigid syllabus, traditional nature of questions, disproportionate importance given to examination over the teaching learning process, and uninteresting and defective way of teaching were some of the major factors responsible for today's apathy towards History.

The teachers mostly used traditional approaches such as lecture, narrative, and discussion. In light of these considerations, it was determined that a new approach to the teaching of the History subject is required. The researcher believed that Using Comic Strips may be used more successfully to engage all students and improve assimilation of the subject by all students in the class, as well as to generate a sense of achievement and engagement among the students.



Statement of the problem

“A study of the Effectiveness of Teaching through Comic Strips on History Academic Achievement and Interest of Upper Primary Students”

Need and significance of the study

The subject of History has a lot of importance in the school curriculum. The study of History plays a very important role in the achievement of aims and objectives of the educational policy of the government. The learning of History also helps the students to develop appropriate attitudes towards others and acquire the skills that enable them to function effectively as individuals and also as members of the group in the national and international arena. Because of this, the learning of History should be more effective. At the upper primary level, the students being adolescents, the teacher should teach History in a creative manner. To make the subject more interesting, various teaching methods can be used.

The most used course material in the process of gaining scientific knowledge of History subject is undoubtedly the textbooks prepared in accordance with acquisitions in the program. Textbooks allow the subject to be handled systematically as a guide both for teachers and students (Ünal & Demirkaya, 2019); however, in lessons such as History, which has abstract concepts which are difficult to understand, using only the textbook and not supporting it with other course materials may decrease students' interest in the lesson or decrease efficiency.

At this point, we come across comics that are becoming more and more popular in the field of education (Lazarinis, Mazaraki, Verykios & Panagiotakopoulos, 2015; Topkaya, 2016). The combination of images and texts in comics helps students to see the process more attractive by changing their perspective on learning processes (Astuti, Kismini & Prasetyo, 2014). In this respect, different researches have revealed that using comics as a teaching material will have positive contributions to the learning-teaching process (Mamola, 2019; Yang, 2003).

Using Comic Strips in teaching History subjects will provide opportunities for authentic learning based on students' needs, interests and talents. Also, students will become more active, involved learners. It will help teachers explain and promote understanding at intrapersonal, interpersonal and cultural levels. It will also aid teachers in easily creating more personalized and diversified instructional experiences.

Aims

- To study the effectiveness of teaching through comic Strips on History Academic Achievement and Interest of Upper Primary Students.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of comic strips on Academic Achievement.
- To understand how comic strips can enhance the interest of students in history.

Objectives of the Study

- To design and implement an Intervention module based on the usage of Comic Strips among the Upper Primary students in History subject.
- To study the effectiveness of using Comic Strips on Academic Achievement in History subject among the Upper Primary students.
- To find the interest of the students in History subject after the intervention of the module.

Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the pre-test History Achievement Scores of the experimental and control groups.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the post-test History Achievement Scores of the experimental and control groups.

H₀₃ There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group in the interest test of History.



Operational definitions of the key terms

Effectiveness - In the present study, effectiveness refers to the ‘degree or capacity of producing success in the teaching of History subject by pretest and posttest comparison.

Comic Strips - In this research, comic strips refer to a set of learning material for teaching History.’

Academic Achievement in History subject - It refers to the difference between the Pre-Test and Post-Test scores of the participants on a criterion referenced test on the selected topics in History.

Interest in History subject - In this study, it will be indicated by the responses of the participants based on interest inventory.

Upper Primary students - Students of the age group 12-14 years, studying in grade 7th in school in Mumbai, affiliated to SSC Board.

Scope of the study

- Content in the textbook prepared by NCERT Bureau of textbook production and SSC Board text books for history subject will form the basis for preparation of Comic Strips based instructional material.
- The lesson plans, teaching learning material in terms of Comic Strips presentations prepared by the researcher on selected units of History subject will be useful for Grade VII students following the SSC board syllabus.

Delimitations of the Study

- **Geographical delimitations:** The present study is delimited to school in Mira Road.
- **Sample delimitations:** The present study is delimited to two division of SSC Board School in Mumbai city and students of the Upper Primary section studying in Grade VII.
- **Tool delimitations:** The results of the present study are delimited to the results obtained in the conceptual understanding test developed by the researchers.

Research Design of the present study

The present study is a quasi-experimental study following the pre-test post-test non-equivalent-group design. In this there are two groups one is called control group and other experimental group. First pre-test is given to both groups. Then the treatment is given to the experimental group. This followed by the post test for both groups which attempts to find out the effectiveness of comic strips for enhancing achievement and interest in History among the upper primary school students as indicated by the post-test scores of the participants. It can be depicted as follows.

O1 X O2 (O1 O3: Pre-Test)
O3 C O4 (O2 O4: Post-Test)

The differences of the means of (O1 O2: Experimental) and (O3 O4: Control) were tested for statistical significance.

Sampling Technique

In the present study, the researchers made use of purposive sampling technique. In order to study the effect of module on students for “enhancing achievement and interest” based on topic “Mughal Empire and The Story of Taj Mahal”.

Participants

The researchers selected 7th standard students of Madhusudan Global School studying in the SSC board. The sample for the study consisted of randomly selected 32 students of standard 7th for the Control and Experimental group.

Tools for Data Collection

The researchers prepared the following tools for data collection

- A) Criterion referenced test to be used as pre-test/post-test;
- B) Instructional module, for instructional intervention;
- C) An interest scale to assess the interest of the student to learn by the new method.



Module design Overview of the Instructional Module



Procedure for Data Collection For Experimental Group

Preplanning	Preparing of the pretest and interest inventory on the selected topic to test the entry behavior of the upper primary students.
Day 1	Administering the pretest and conducting interest inventory with the students.
Day 2	Orientation to the topic Mughal Empire, teacher had prepared the lesson plan on Mughal Empire using comic strips and lecture was conducted using comic strips.
Day 3	Teacher continued the topic of the Mughal Empire by using comic strips. Teacher also involved students in the lecture to read the comic strips and share their understanding of the topic.
Day 4	Teacher started with the second topic Story behind the Taj Mahal, by using comic strips.
Day 5	Completion of the 2 nd topic and recapitulation of both the topics for students by using comic strips.
Day 6	Administering the posttest to test the understanding interest and retention of students by learning the topic of The Mughal Empire and The Story behind Taj Mahal.
Day 7	Conducting Interest Inventory with the students.

For Control Group

Pre planning	Preparing of the pretest on the selected topic to test the entry behavior of the middle school students
Day 1	Administering the pretest and conducting Interest inventory

Day 2, Day 3, Day 4, Day 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Teaching of the topic the Mughal empire by lecture cum discussion method completion of the 1st topic • Introduction of the 2nd topic The Story behind Taj Mahal • Completion of the 2nd topic and recapitulation of both the topics for students.
Day 6	Administering the posttest to test the understanding interest and retention of students by learning the topic of The Mughal Empire and The Story behind Taj Mahal.
Day 7	Conducting Interest Inventory with the students

DATA ANALYSIS

Verification of Hypotheses

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the pre-test History Achievement Scores of the experimental and control groups.

Table 1

Numerical data and level of significance for Computation of ‘t’ of the Pre -test of control group and experimental group

Group	N	Df	Mean	SD	Table value		t value	I.o.s
Control group	32	49	10.53	1.98	0.05	0.01	1.70	Significant at 0.05 level
Experimental group	32		11.22	1.13	1.67	2.39		

From the table, it could be seen that the obtained value of t is 1.70 which is less than the table value of 2.39 at 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation:

There is a significant difference in the pre-test scores of upper primary students in the experimental and control groups.

Discussion

The initial conceptualizations of the students regarding comic strips and teaching were very limited. Students learning involve only passive listening by the teachers or using the lecture cum discussion method and straight away putting the same into examination. Process of teaching through the comic strips was never the part of teaching. Therefore, there was not much difference in the pretest achievement test scores of both control and the experimental groups.

H₀2. There is no significant difference in the post-test History Achievement Scores of the experimental and control groups.

Table 2: Numerical data and level of significance for Computation of ‘t’ of the post-test of control group and experimental group

Group	N	Df	Mean	SD	Table value		t value	I.o.s
Control group	32	49	10.84	2.52	0.05	0.01	7.84	Significant
Experimental group	32		15.39	2.33	1.67	2.39		

From the table, it could be seen that the obtained value of t is 7.84 which is greater than the table value of 2.39 at 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation

There is a significant difference in the post-test scores of upper primary school students in experimental and control groups.

Discussion

The research conducted by the researcher corroborates with the research conducted by Sari Manik R.M (2019 and Muhammad Muhajirin (2019) The comic strip-based learning strategies could contribute to increasing the achievement scores among the upper primary students. The researcher feels that this could be attributed to the fact that the students enjoyed learning through comic strips and were also able to retain the concepts, as students are conditioned to the traditional methods of teaching-learning and consider history as a boring subject and are also dependent on rote memorization. But through these strategies, students develop interest and also are able to focus more and are able to retain the concepts. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the post test scores of both the experimental and the control group.

H₀3. There is no significance difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group in the interest test of History.

Table 3: Numerical Data and Level of Significance for Computing Difference in Interest Test of Pre-Test and Post-Test of Experimental Group

Group	N	Df	Mean	SD	Table value		t value	I.o.s	100 _o ² estimate
Control group	32	49	56.21	1.13	0.05	0.01	11.93	Significant	60%
Experimental group	32		72.63	1.14	1.67	2.39			

From the table, it could be seen that the obtained value of t is 11.93 which is greater than the table value of 2.39 at 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation:

There is significant difference of pre-test and post-test of interest score of experimental groups at 0.01 levels

Discussion

The research conducted by the researcher corroborates with the research conducted by Sari Manik R.M (2019 and Muhammad Muhajirin (2019). The comic strip-based learning strategies could contribute to increasing the interest among the upper primary students, the researcher feels that this could be attributed to the fact that the students enjoyed learning through comic strips, as students are conditioned to the traditional methods of teaching-learning and consider history as a boring subject. But through these strategies, students develop interest in the learning process, Tarun said that “It was quite good! Studying history through comic strips was helping me to understand more”! Similarly, Anousha gave her view that “I felt that history was the most boring subject of all but it was really interesting to study through the comic strips. I think that comic strips-based learning has helped me a lot in retaining the concepts in history.

This may definitely go a long way in creating the atmosphere which is more relaxed and comfortable for students. This will give them confidence and also develop desirable interest in the children towards the subjects to be learnt. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest interest scores of the experimental group.

Suggestions

The researchers have given few suggestions to the teacher using comic strips to achieve conceptual clarity as well as to create a student centric learning environment. Teacher should prepare programs in such a way that the objective of teaching and learning is achieved along with the integration of the use of comic strips strategies. The topics “the Mughal Empire and The Story Behind Taj Mahal should be taught through comic strips.



Teacher should prepare the program according to their students' need and maturity level. Most of today's students get fully involved when taught through comic strips. Students should be given freedom to question, discuss and explore.

CONCLUSION

Now it is time to introspect about the History education – its objective, its problem, its job potential, its quality, its course content, course conduct method and its relevance to the present day needs of our country.

In this thesis efforts have been made to re-think re-design the History teaching. Efforts have been made by the researcher to introduce instructional intervention using comic strips in order to create conceptual clarity, interest and retention in History subject among upper primary school students. This intervention has made a substantial impact as is evident from the difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the participants. The fact that “t” value is highly significant and the degree of variance between the pre-test and post-test series indicates that instructional module has been highly effective in enhancing the quality instruction. Thus, researcher sums up by suggesting that every History researcher should prepare instructional module.

It is high time for soul searching. For an objective appraisal which will provide the basis for enhancing a new strategy for giving a better deal to History education in the year to come. Therefore, there is the need for an all-out effort to re-orient and re design the history education in such a way that it will be relevant for today and tomorrow.

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