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Multilingual Multicultural Multimedia: Transforming Higher Education Through Transdisciplinary Action Research Projects

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Abstract

Situated within the context of higher education, this study outlines of use of participatory action research in developing global competencies, critical thinking, and 21st-century skills among students and showcases their transformative, inclusive, multilingual, multicultural research projects across content areas.

This participatory action research study aims to advance scientific knowledge of transformative critical pedagogy as a means to promote heutagogy through the lens of innovative technologies in a global education context while redefining education and developing a “transformative educator model.”

Introduction

This **participatory action research (PAR)** attempts to address deep-rooted ideologies to social inequities by creating a space in teacher education courses to re-examine current curriculum as opposed to transformative, collaborative, and inclusive curriculum. As the transformative education intersects with race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, global education framework can be used as a tool for social justice education. Borrowing and extending the work of critical theorists, particularly, Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire, this PAR explores the Transformative Critical Pedagogy to teaching and learning and in the second half of the 21st century.

Purpose

We outline the role of global literacy skills in teacher education while integrating multiple literacies as a means for further developing participants’ global competencies, critical thinking and 21st century skills; highlights transdisciplinary and Universal Design of Learning (UDL) curriculum projects with limited resources and equipment in global education context; and showcases best practices in teacher education programs that are transdisciplinary, inclusive and transformative.

This PAR study sought to accomplish four main goals: (1) promoting transformative leadership, global literacy, and 21st century skills among pre-service teachers while providing cultural and linguistically responsive curriculum; (2) describing pre-service teachers’ reactions, discoveries, and experiences participating in Multilingual Multicultural Media projects across content areas (e.g. math, geography, cultural studies); (3) identifying innovative activities, exercises, and assessment strategies and tools that align with the local and national standards addressing Transformative Education, Global Competency, Media Literacy and 21st century skills; and

(4) investigating the role of multiple literacies (e.g. information, technology, geography, media literacy) and the use of new technologies (mobile tools such as GPS, tablet PCs, robotics) in developing global competencies and 21st century skills among pre-service teachers.

Relevant Literature

This study examines to role of global education by aligning local, national, and international standards and frameworks such as 1) The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), supports the use of information technology in K-12 schools; 2) The Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE) is an international association of teacher educators dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge, theory and quality of learning and teaching; 3) The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) promotes excellence in learning, teaching, and leading and delivers innovative programs, products, and services; 4) Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) plays an active role in guiding policy and projects on 21st century readiness; 5) Council of Chief State School Officers’ (CCSSO) and the Asia Society Partnership for the Global Learning defined the term global competence matrix; and 6) The National Center on Universal Design for Learning at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) outlines strategies and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Research Questions

- 1) Is it possible to introduce participatory action research to teacher candidates in a way that will empower them professionally and prepare them for reflective and transformative leaders in education?
- 2) What are the pedagogical and transformative perspectives in-service teachers and teacher educators in relation to the teaching practices that they find essential in preparing future transformative educators?
- 3) What are the advantages and challenges in fostering transformative thinking and critical autonomy among learners while implementing Transformative Critical Education and Visionary Leadership Theory in teacher education?
- 4) What are the effective and research based teaching strategies and transformative resources that are recommended by the participants?

Data Analysis

This study employs qualitative methods to capture the descriptive elements related to the pedagogical perspectives and teaching practices used by the teacher educators identified as effective by teacher candidates. To triangulate the findings, several qualitative methods were employed to collect the data: (a) focus groups, (b) reflective journals, self-study (c) interviews, (d) peer review/dialog online, (e) survey, and (f) ethnographic field notes.

This study focuses on teacher perceptions and experiences of engaging in collaborative action research on professional identity and practice. This qualitative study focuses on understanding the lived experiences of 40 teacher candidates before, during, and after engaging in action research at the same time conducting a self-study on my own teaching practices through the lens of global education.

Procedures

Participants engaged in self-study while reflecting on innovative transformative curricula, assessment tools, and strategies for 21st Century teaching. The research explores and outlines innovative assessment tools, templates, and strategies to cultivate “transformative educator model” among pre-service teachers, to active thinking curriculum and to reflect on their own learning process.

PAR team consists of three teacher education faculty and over 40 pre-service teachers. Participants for the study recruited from senior seminar courses and the faculty in teacher education. The study focused on (a) re-designing our teacher education courses while conducting a participatory action research (PAR) with instructors of these courses who self assess the “Transformative Educator Model” in their own teaching and learning; (b) exploring innovative and transformative teaching models, tools, strategies, and best practices for teacher education curriculum integrating global competencies, critical thinking and 21st century skills; (c) investigating participants’ reflections and reactions to transformative and culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum while reflecting on their own practice. In the second phase of the study, pre-service teachers invited the campus community to share their design of a “gallery walk” that is based on Museum approach to teaching. Gallery Walk for our research project is a collection of artifacts (i.e. maps, pictures, posters, audio and video clips) designed to showcase the importance and exemplary usage of multicultural multilingual learning modules and digital stories across content areas as well as receive reactions and feedback from other pre-service teachers and teacher education faculty on transformative educator model.

Social Change Implications

This study will have a broader impact in teacher education field and benefit teacher candidates, teacher educators, K-12 educators, parents, and administrators who seek transformative and innovative strategies and tools for improving instruction, assessing students' work and for preparing new generations to be future “transformative and visionary leaders” and global citizens.

Findings

Results indicate transforming our own teaching is more important than ever. Designing curriculum for a deeper understanding, setting higher standards with a set of clear expectations of what students need to learn, emphasizing the application of knowledge, and incorporating assessment throughout the curricular process have long been documented.

Participants completed a weekly checklist for teaching education models (from Traditional, Progressive to Transformative) which guided participants to outline their self reflections. Participants shared their challenges and triumphs on a weekly bases; peer observing and providing feedback to each other.

As one student wrote:

The past few months allowed me to reflect upon my life and teaching career. I learned “pedagogy of plenty” versus “pedagogy of poverty”; this help me to know that in my own past I was taught by the latter, but as a future “edupreneur” I will embrace “pedagogy of plenty.” I have also learned to look intently at history, commercials, stereotypes (i.e. scientist) and other public publication for “myths and misconceptions.”

Most importantly, the study provided open dialog and communication among faculty, pre-service and in-service teachers to bridge theory into practice while integrating innovative technologies and frameworks.

Conclusions

This study provides voices from the field who has used and been using innovative technologies in co-producing and co-developing multilingual projects, children books, digital stories, podcasts and e-portfolios using various mobile technologies.

As we continue to teach and learn from my teacher candidates, we developed curriculum models that integrate multilingual and multicultural approach to lesson planning using UDL model, to treat their special education and ELL students as an asset to their classroom not a deficit, to prepare them for globally connected world.

With the help of new technologies, we continue to challenge our teaching materials and develop innovative and transdisciplinary curriculum projects that combine knowledge, reflection, and action; promote global literacies and mutual understanding; and prepare new generation to be responsible members of a multicultural, global society.