

Research on the Integration of Thematic Teaching of Middle School History Units and Excellent Classroom Construction

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Abstract

Under the background of the continuous promotion of new curriculum reform and the continuous strengthening of the core literacy of history subjects, middle school history classes are no longer satisfied with the teaching of a single knowledge point, but pay more attention to the comprehensive construction of students' historical development vein, historical interpretation methods and value judgement ability. Unit thematic teaching takes the theme as a clue, and systematically integrates the content of textbooks, historical situations, learning tasks, historical resources and evaluation activities, which helps to change the problems of fragmented content, shallow activities and scattered goals in traditional history classes. The construction of excellent classroom emphasises the high quality, high efficiency and high educational value of classroom teaching, and requires teachers to realise the unity of knowledge learning, ability improvement and literacy development in limited classroom time. The two have strong consistency in teaching philosophy, goal orientation and implementation method. Based on this, this article analyses the integration of thematic teaching of middle school history units and excellent classroom construction, and explores its inherent value, real problems and practical path, in order to provide reference for improving the quality of middle school history classes.

Keywords

Middle school history; unit thematic teaching; excellent classroom; historical core literacy; classroom construction.

1. Introduction

Middle school history teaching undertakes the important task of imparting historical knowledge, cultivating historical thinking and cultivating patriotism. For a long time, some history classes have been affected by the stress of class time, exam pressure and traditional teaching inertia, and it is easy to form a teaching model that is promoted lesson by lesson in the order of textbooks. Although students can remember some historical events, characters and time nodes, it is difficult to truly understand the intrinsic connection of historical development [1-3]. With the implementation of the new curriculum standards, history teaching pays more attention to the cultivation of core literacy, requiring students to understand history, analyse historical materials, explain phenomena and form reasonable judgements in specific situations. It is against this background that unit thematic teaching is emphasised. It can help teachers get out of the limitations of single-course knowledge points and unify the teaching content from a higher level. The construction of excellent classrooms provides a target framework and practical requirements for the improvement of classroom quality. The combination of the two can not only enhance the integrity of the historical classroom, but also promote the classroom from "taught knowledge" to "development literacy".

2. The Connotation of Unit-themed Teaching and Excellent Classroom Construction

Unit thematic teaching does not simply combine several lessons, but focusses on the historical theme of leading significance, and the overall design of the content of textbooks, historical materials, problem situations and learning activities. The theme can come from important clues of historical development, the core concepts in the curriculum standards, or around a historical phenomenon, historical transformation or value issues. The key is to establish the connection between knowledge through the theme, so that students can form a structured understanding in the process of continuous learning. The construction of excellent classrooms places more emphasis on the quality of classroom operation. It requires clear classroom goals, excellent teaching content, sufficient learning process, effective interaction between teachers and students, and timely evaluation and feedback. The excellent classroom does not pursue superficial excitement, but focusses on whether students really participate in thinking, whether they have formed ability improvement, and whether they have acquired literacy development. From this point of view, unit thematic teaching provides a content organisation method for excellent classrooms, and excellent classroom construction provides quality evaluation standards for thematic teaching.

3. The Value of Integrating Thematic Teaching and Excellent Classroom Construction of Middle School History Units

Table 1. The value of the integration of thematic teaching and excellent classroom construction in middle school history units

Value Dimension	Specific Manifestations	Impact on the Classroom
Integrated Classroom Structure	Shifting from fragmented knowledge instruction to integrated thematic units	Break knowledge fragmentation and establish an integrated learning framework
Deepened Learning Logic	Integrating texts, historical materials, and inquiry questions around themes	Strengthen comparative, connective, and explanatory skills
Unified Teaching Objectives	Coordinating unit themes with competency-based learning objectives	Shift classroom objectives from knowledge acquisition to competency and literacy development
Shift in Learning Approaches	Historical material reading, contextual analysis, and collaborative inquiry	Transform students from passive recipients to active knowledge builders
Enhanced Classroom Effectiveness	Transitioning teaching processes from lecture-based to inquiry-based	Enhance classroom interaction and learning efficiency

The combination of unit-themed teaching and excellent classroom construction can promote the history classroom in middle schools from fragmented teaching to overall construction. History subjects have the characteristics of chronological, causal and comprehensive. If they are only explained at a single knowledge point, it is easy for students to understand history as an accumulation of isolated events. The theme of the unit can integrate the text content, historical resources and problem situations into a unified framework, and guide students to grasp the inherent logic of historical development in comparison, connection and interpretation. The construction of excellent classroom emphasises the generation of

classroom benefits and literacy, which is consistent with the goal of pursuing deep understanding in thematic teaching. The integration of the two is conducive to promoting the classroom structure from fragmentation to systematisation, the learning mode from acceptance to construction, and the teaching goal from knowledge-oriented to literacy orientation, so as to enhance students' history. Thinking ability. As shown in Table 1, the integration mode is superior to the traditional classroom in many dimensions. In terms of classroom structure, it realises the transformation from class time segmentation to unit integration; in terms of learning logic, from single memory to associative analysis; in terms of teaching goals, from knowledge mastery to core literacy development; in terms of learning mode, from passive acceptance to active construction; in terms of classroom effectiveness, from inefficient teaching to efficient exploration. This integration not only improves the quality of classroom teaching, but also provides structural support for the implementation of historical core literacy.

4. The Main Problems in The Current History Classroom Teaching in Middle Schools

4.1. Fragmentation of teaching content

The fragmentation of teaching content is a common problem in middle school history classes. Affected by the arrangement of textbooks, class schedule and exam review methods, some teachers are used to explaining point by point in the order of the text, dealing with historical events, characters, systems, wars and reforms separately. This teaching method is convenient for students to master the basic knowledge in a short time, but it is easy to weaken the intrinsic connection between historical content. For example, students may know the time and measures of a certain reform, but do not know the changes in the social structure behind the reform; they can recite the results of a war, but it is difficult to understand the relationship between the war, national development and the international landscape. Once historical learning is cut into isolated information, students often form memory knowledge rather than structured cognition[4]. Unit thematic teaching can reorganise the relevant content through the theme command, guide students to understand history from the perspective of the background of the times, the development process, the historical impact and the revelation of reality, and enhance the logical depth of the classroom.

4.2. The teaching goal focusses on knowledge memory

In some middle school history classes, the teaching goal is still obviously biased towards knowledge memory, and teachers often take "remembering time, characters, places, events and meanings" as the main task of the classroom. Knowledge mastery is certainly the foundation of historical learning, but if the classroom goal stays at the memory level for a long time, it will be difficult for students to develop core literacy such as historical evidence, historical interpretation, space-time concept and patriotism. The value of history is not only to tell students what happened in the past, but also to guide students to understand why history happens like this, how different factors interact, and why historical understanding needs evidence to support it. Narrow goals will directly affect the teaching method. Teachers are easy to design the classroom as explanation and memorisation, while students are used to waiting for standard answers and lack active analysis and independent expression. The construction of excellent classrooms requires classroom goals to be hierarchical and developmental. We should pay attention not only to basic knowledge, but also to thinking ability and value guidance. The goal of history teaching should change from simple knowledge recognition to literacy-oriented comprehensive goals.

4.3. Formalisation of teaching activities

In recent years, many history classes have begun to introduce group discussions, role-playing, historical material study, classroom presentation and other forms of activities, which has changed the monotonous state of traditional lecture classes to a certain extent. However, some classroom activities still tend to be formalised, which shows that the activity design is disconnected from the theme goal, and students participate in the excitement but the thinking content is insufficient. Some discussion questions are too simple, and students only need to find ready-made answers from textbooks; some role-playing only pursues the classroom atmosphere and does not guide students to understand the position of the characters and historical conditions; some historical material analysis is limited to reading materials and finding sentences, and lacks evidence identification and opinion construction[5-6]. If the activity does not serve historical understanding, it is easy to become a classroom decoration and even squeeze out the time for real thinking. The excellent classroom does not exclude activities, but emphasises that activities should have clear tasks, thinking challenges, and feedback on results. Unit thematic teaching can provide a clear direction for classroom activities, so that each activity revolves around the theme, and ultimately leads to students' in-depth understanding of historical issues.

5. The Integration Path of Thematic Teaching of Middle School History Units and The Construction of Excellent Classrooms

5.1. Clarify the unit theme

Clarifying the unit theme is the starting point for unit thematic teaching and an important foundation for building an excellent classroom. The determination of the theme should not be too broad, nor should it be just a repetition of the title of the textbook, but should be able to lead the content of the unit, reveal the historical connection and trigger students to think. For example, when learning the relevant content of modern Chinese history, teachers can set the theme around "National Crisis and Rescue Exploration" to guide students to understand the impact of war, institutional change, ideological enlightenment and social movements. Once the theme is clear, the classroom content can form the main line, and students can constantly return to the core issues in the learning process. When determining the theme, teachers need to comprehensively consider the standard requirements of the curriculum, the content structure of textbooks, the cognitive level of students and the characteristics of historical subjects. A good topic should not only have knowledge inclusiveness, but also open-mindedness, which can support students to carry out comparison, analysis and interpretation. Through thematic guidance, the classroom can reduce fragmented explanations, enhance the sense of direction and integrity of teaching, and lay the foundation for follow-up goal design, situation creation and activity organisation.

5.2. Formulate literacy-oriented teaching goals

The teaching goal should shift from simple knowledge mastery to core literacy cultivation, which is the key link in the integration of unit thematic teaching and excellent classroom construction. When setting goals, teachers should not only write about students' "understanding" and "mastering" certain historical knowledge, but should also further clarify what kind of historical understanding, analytical ability and value awareness students can form through learning. Focussing on the theme of the same unit, the goal can be developed from multiple levels: at the knowledge level, students need to grasp the important historical facts and development vein; at the ability level, students should be able to read historical materials, extract information, compare views and make explanations; at the thinking level, students should understand the causal relationship between historical events and the characteristics of

the times. At the value level, students can form a rational understanding of national development, social change and human civilisation. Such a goal design can make the classroom not only knowledgeable, but also highly educated. The pursuit of excellent classes is not to complete a large amount of content in a short time, but to let students achieve real and continuous literacy improvement under the guidance of clear goals.

5.3. Create a real historical situation

Historical learning cannot be separated from situational support. Real and appropriate historical situations can help students enter a specific era, so as to understand the complex conditions of historical figures and historical events. When creating situations, teachers should make comprehensive use of multiple resources such as pictures, maps, literature, physical materials and problem situations, so that students can change from "passive acceptance of historical conclusions" to "actively entering the historical context for interpretation and analysis". The key to situational design is whether it can develop the theme of the service unit with the core issues and avoid the fragmentation and surface of the situation[7]. In teaching practice, different situational organisation methods have a significant impact on students' learning behaviour. As shown in Table 1, the overall level of learning participation of middle school students in the traditional single-situation presentation method is relatively low, while the integration of multiple historical materials and problem-driven situations significantly improve the quality of students' historical material utilisation and classroom participation, as shown in Figure 1. This shows that high-quality situations can effectively promote the generation of students' historical thinking. Situational design in excellent classrooms should emphasise authenticity, targeting and task-oriented, and unit thematic teaching provides structural support for situational selection, so as to realise the transformation from "situational presentation" to "situation-driven learning".

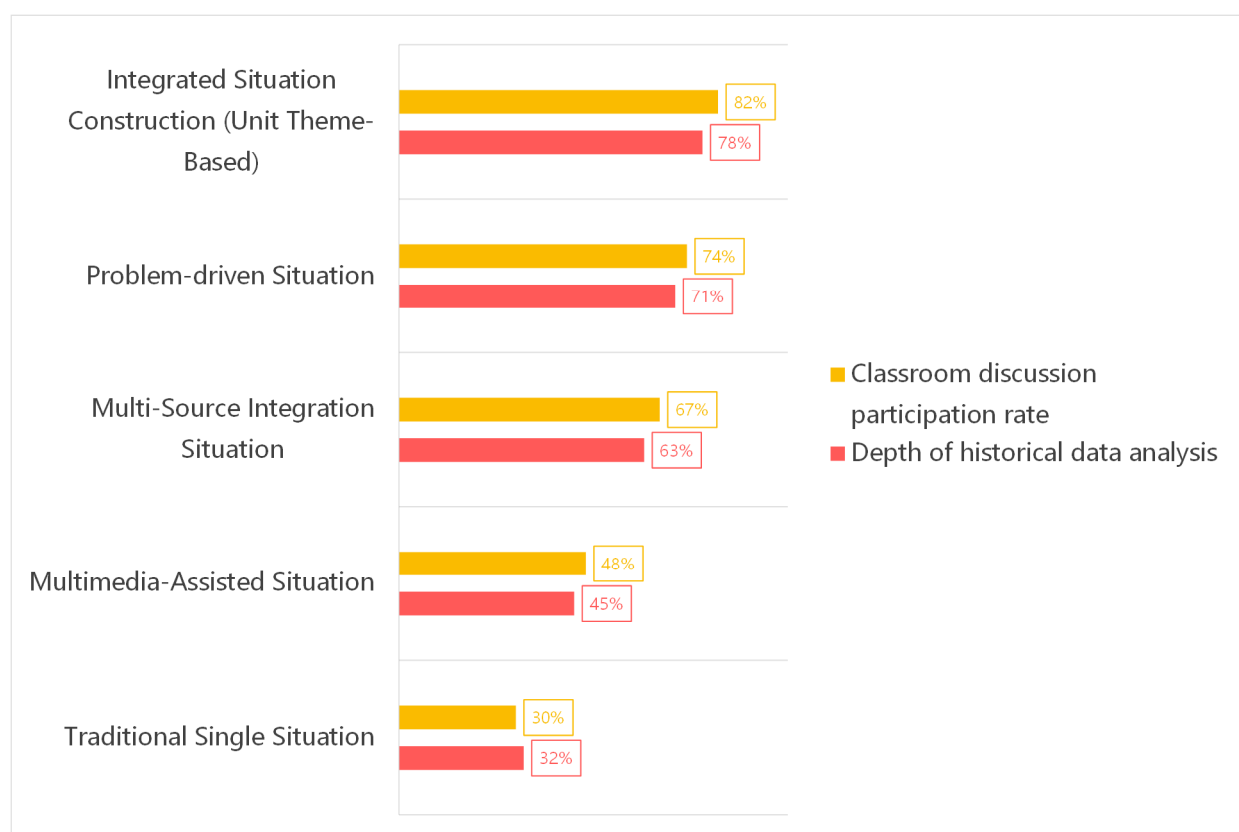


Figure 1. Comparison of students' learning performance under different situational creation methods

5.4. Design the problem chain

The question chain is an important tool to connect unit themes, classroom content and students' thinking. An effective question chain is not a simple arrangement of several scattered problems, but a thinking path that gradually unfolds around the theme and advances layer by layer. Teachers can design problems into different levels such as factual understanding, cause analysis, comparative judgement, historical interpretation and reality reflection according to students' cognitive laws. For example, when exploring the theme of "reform and social transformation", students can first be guided to understand the background of reform, then analyse the relationship between reform measures and social contradictions, and then compare the reasons for the success or failure of different reforms, and finally think about the inspiration of reform to national development. This kind of design can make students' learning process from shallow to deep, and avoid staying in memory conclusions in the classroom. The excellent classroom emphasises the main position of students, and the question chain is an important support to stimulate students to think actively. Through the guidance of continuous questions, students can gradually develop the ability to explain history in answering, discussing, questioning and expressing.

5.5. Optimise classroom activities

Classroom activities are an important carrier for students to participate in history learning, but the design of activities must be closely related to the unit theme and teaching objectives. When optimising classroom activities, teachers should avoid arranging activities that are not strongly related to the theme in order to liven up the atmosphere, and should not let the activities stay on the surface. Historical material study, cooperative exploration, opinion debate, timeline construction, historical map analysis and theme display can be flexibly selected according to the content of different units[8-9]. The activity design should highlight the sense of task, so that students can clarify what problems need to be solved, what materials they need to use, and what kind of results they need to form. For example, when learning the content related to institutional change, students can analyse different historical materials in groups and form explanations from the three perspectives of reform background, implementation measures and historical impact. During the activity, teachers should make timely calls to guide students from material evidence to expression of views. The activities in the excellent classroom are not a supplement to the teacher's lectures, but the process of students' in-depth learning. Only when the activities truly carry thinking training can classroom efficiency and teaching quality be improved simultaneously.

5.6. Improve classroom evaluation

Under the background of the current deepening curriculum reform of basic education, historical classroom evaluation is gradually shifting from a single result orientation to a multi-evaluation system. According to the research data of the Chinese Academy of Education and Science in 2023, in the history classroom of middle schools, the evaluation is still mainly based on paper and pen test and knowledge point memory, and the proportion of expressive evaluation (such as historical material analysis and classroom display) and process evaluation (such as learning list and learning file bag) is equivalent. As shown in Figure 1, the current evaluation structure is still based on knowledge evaluation, but the proportion of process and expressive evaluation has increased significantly, indicating that the evaluation system is transforming from test-oriented to core literacy-oriented. In practical cases, a key middle school in Nanjing introduced a multi-dimensional evaluation system in the "1911 Revolution Unit Theme Teaching", and included historical interpretation, classroom expression, group cooperation and unit tasks into the comprehensive evaluation. Among them, process and expressive evaluation accounted for 60%, effectively improving students' historical interpretation ability and thinking depth. . The case shows that when the evaluation method

changes from single knowledge testing to multi-dimensional literacy evaluation, students' learning investment and thinking participation are significantly enhanced, thus promoting the transformation of history classes from "knowledge transfer" to "literacy generation".

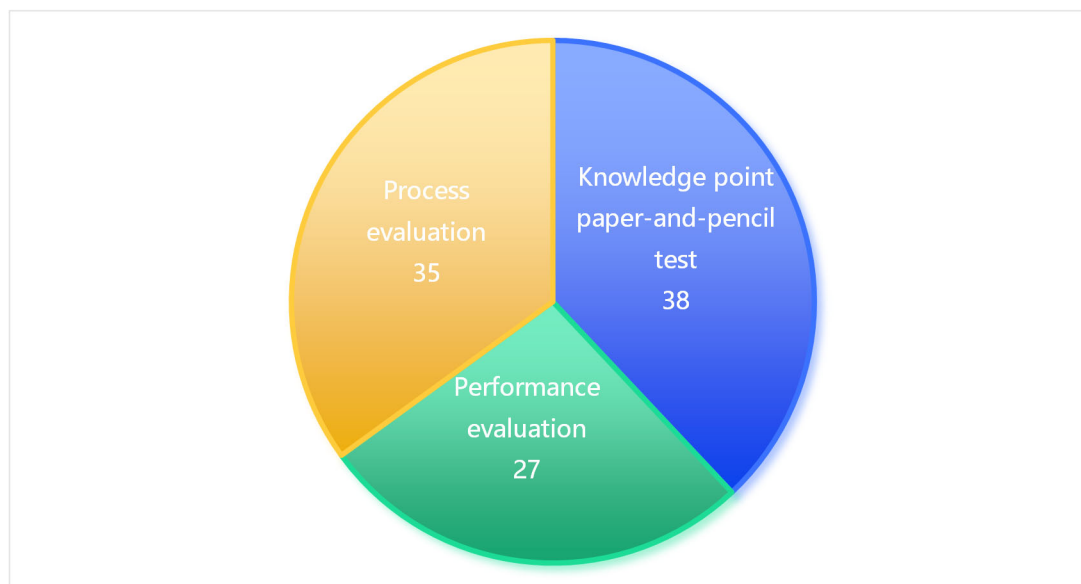


Figure 2. Structural distribution of middle school history classroom evaluation methods

6. Conclusion

The integration of thematic teaching of middle school history units and the construction of excellent classrooms is an important direction to improve the quality of history teaching under the background of the new curriculum reform. Unit thematic teaching can break through the limitation of distributed knowledge points and guide students to understand the vein and laws of historical development as a whole; the construction of excellent classrooms emphasises the high-quality operation of classroom goals, processes, activities and evaluations, and provides practical standards for thematic teaching. After the combination of the two, the history class can better realise the unity of knowledge learning, ability cultivation and value guidance. Of course, this integration process puts forward higher requirements for teachers' curriculum understanding, textbook integration ability, problem design ability and classroom organisation ability. Teachers need to constantly reflect and adjust in teaching practice to avoid problems such as empty themes, formalisation of activities and single evaluation. In the future practice, middle school history classes should continue to be guided by core literacy, take theme integration as the path, and take high-quality classes as the goal, so as to promote students to understand history, recognise reality, and form a sense of responsibility in real thinking.

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