HISTORICAL INQUIRY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL GROUPS IN A SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses a problem of practice stemming from the accountability movement and its emphasis on high-stakes testing in the social studies classroom. An examination of the problem of practice led to the research question: How does the use of the scientifically based method of historical inquiry affect student perceptions of cultures other than their own? The purpose of this action research study was to examine the use of historical inquiry as a means of combating the lack of depth in a formal curriculum focused on high-stakes testing and a hidden curriculum that promotes a “top-down,” Eurocentric approach to history which can affect students’ perceptions of cultures beyond their own. A one-group pretest-posttest quantitative design was used to determine the viability of using historical inquiry and multicultural content to increase ethnocultural empathy among student-participants. An analysis of the data did not indicate any statistically significant changes. However, increases in the Empathic Awareness mean score and the median scores of three individual items warrant further study.

Keywords: accountability, action research, ethnocultural empathy, hidden curriculum, high-stakes testing, historical inquiry