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Measures to enhance awareness of the cultural value of Gongs in the central highlands among students of ethnic boarding secondary schools in Vietnam - experimental results

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Abstract

Traditional culture is the exquisite beauty of the nation, representing the unique identity of each ethnic group. Preserving and maintaining the values of traditional culture is crucial for the survival of a nation. Traditional culture in general, and the Gong culture of the Central Highlands in particular, are distinctive and exemplary features of this region. Therefore, educating students about the values of traditional culture, especially Gong culture, is an important and necessary issue in the current period. This article discusses the experimental results of three educational measures to instill the cultural values of the Central Highlands gongs in students of ethnic boarding secondary schools. The measures experimented with include: educating on the cultural values of Central Highlands gongs through integrated teaching in Civic Education; extracurricular activities; and experiential learning activities. The results show that all three measures were quite effective in raising students' awareness. Among them, the measure of organizing education through experiential activities had the highest level of awareness improvement (+3.45 points). The measure of education through extracurricular activities ranked second (+2.94 points). The method of integration through the Civic Education subject had the lowest improvement (+2.14 points).

Keywords: educational experiment, raising awareness, Central Highlands gong culture, students, ethnic boarding secondary schools



Introduction

The cultural space of the Gong culture in the Central Highlands spans five provinces: Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, and Lam Dong. The creators of this distinctive cultural form are the ethnic groups of the Central Highlands: Bana, Xêđăng, Mnông, Cồh, Romã, Êđê, Giarai, and others. Gongs are closely tied to the lives of the Central Highlands people. The culture of the Central Highlands gongs was recognized as an “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO on November 25, 2005. UNESCO Vietnam Organization (2010). The culture of the Central Highlands gongs is a composite concept encompassing all the component elements: the gongs, the musical pieces performed on the gongs, the festivals that involve the use of gongs, the locations where the festivals take place, the gong artisans, and all other elements related to the gongs in the 5 provinces of the Central Highlands (UNESCO Vietnam Organization, 2010).

Gongs have a very long origin. For a long time, the sound of gongs has been ingrained in the subconscious of the people of the Central Highlands. The sound of gongs carries a sacred sound and has many important meanings in the material and spiritual life of the people in the Central Highlands, Thien, Minh, and Long (2010). The event honoring Central Highlands gongs as a world cultural heritage has contributed to bringing Vietnamese culture in general and ethnic minority culture in the Central Highlands in particular to friends across five continents.

The Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam have determined that the culture of the Central Highlands gongs occupies a very important position as a traditional art form that needs to be preserved, safeguarded, and selectively promoted, Central Party Executive Committee (1998). Through various programs for the collection and preservation of ethnic musical instruments, the recording of gong performances, and the teaching of gong performance skills, it can be seen that the Party and the State have adopted the right policies and strategies, and have achieved positive results in the task of preserving the culture of the Central Highlands gongs (Giang, 2015). On the other hand, the youth are the heirs and successors, the ones who will keep the flame of the national culture burning forever. Through the path of education, the new goal of education is to raise students’ awareness of the cultural value of the Central Highlands gongs. From there, the students will have a positive attitude toward preserving and promoting the beauty that humanity has honored.

Research on gong culture, some notable research works and authors include: Tran Ngoc Binh (2008), *Culture of Vietnamese Ethnic Groups*; Binh (2006), *Cultural Life of Ethnic Minorities in the Process of Industrialization and Modernization*; Doanh & Bi (2012), *Rituals and Festivals of the Cham and Ede Peoples*; Doanh (1995), *The Grave Abandonment Festival in the Northern Central Highlands*; Communist Party of Vietnam (1983), *On the Spiritual and Cultural Values of Vietnam*; Communist Party of Vietnam (1998), *On Building and Developing an Advanced Vietnamese Culture with a Strong National Identity*; Ho (2021), *Traditional Culture of the Central Highlands Ethnic Groups: Correct Identification for Effective Preservation*; Khanh (2006), *Cultural Traditions of Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam*; Thien, Minh and Long (2010), *Central Highlands - Land and People*; Donovan & Christopher (2002), *Minority students in special and gifted education*; Oscar Salemink (2003), *The ethnography of Vietnam’s central highlanders: a historical contextualization (1850 – 1900)*; Baker (2007), *Educating Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam: Policies and Perspectives*, Kappa Delta Pi Record.

Faced with the new requirements and challenges in education, we have studied and developed educational measures to raise awareness among students in ethnic minority boarding high schools in the Central Highlands region about the cultural value of the Central Highlands gongs (Saleminck, 2003). Based on a comprehensive review of specialized research sources, a survey of the current situation, and experimental research, we have carried out the research topic: “Experimenting with measures to

enhance the awareness of the cultural value of the Central Highlands gongs for ethnic minority high school students in Vietnam”.

Measures to enhance ethnic minority students’ awareness of the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the central highlands of Vietnam

The educational measures for the cultural values of the Central Highlands gongs for students in ethnic minority boarding high schools covered in the research topic include: organizing the education of the cultural values of the Central Highlands gongs for students in ethnic minority boarding high schools through integrating it into the Civics education subject; through organizing extracurricular activities; and through experiential activities.

Each measure is a way of educating and changing to enhance student’s awareness of the cultural values of the Central Highlands gongs. Although the organizational forms are different, all three measures are aimed at the common goal of helping students have the right awareness of the cultural values of the Central Highlands gongs, have a cherishing and respectful attitude, and have a sense of pride in the traditional values left by their ancestors. From this, students will take action to protect, preserve, and promote the values of the Central Highlands gongs in particular and the good traditional cultural values in general.

Methodology

Samples

The study was conducted with the participation of 90 ethnic minority students in three classes of 10th grade at N’Trang Long Ethnic Minority High School in Dak Lak province. Most of the students were from the Ede ethnic group.

Design of the study

Because traditional cultural values have not been officially taught in the general education curriculum, we have designed an experimental model according to an experimental model without a control group. This is a very common pattern in educational psychology research. The model is described in Table 1.

Table 1. One group Pre-test, Post-test experimental design

The design	Pre-test	Treatments	Post-test
Experimental Class 1	O_{1t}	Integrating into Civil Education	O_{1s}
Experimental Class 2	O_{2t}	Organizing extracurricular activities	O_{2s}
Experimental Class 3	O_{3t}	Organizing field trips	O_{3s}

Note: + O_t ; the average student’s scores before the treatment

+ O_s ; the average student’s scores after the treatment

In the model above, there are three experimental groups following the three treatments. The selection of experimental groups is based on the average score of the pre-test. The selection of experimental subjects ensures to limit of affecting factors to ensure the objectivity of the experimental results obtained.

We calculated the differences with the equation: $O_1 = O_{1s} - O_{1t}$, $O_2 = O_{2s} - O_{2t}$ and $O_3 = O_{3s} - O_{3t}$. The effectiveness of the treatments was examined using T-tests (pairs of the same measure before and

after the treatments) with a significance level of 0.05. ANOVA was also implemented with O_1 , O_2 , and O_3 .

The experimental groups' selection process

The selection of experimental classes was carried out through a tool to measure the awareness of students in ethnic minority boarding high schools about the cultural content of the Central Highlands gongs. The test scores were calculated on a 10-point scale. The results of the 6 participating classes are as follows:

Table 2. Pre-test results of the participating classes

Class	Number of students	Average score	SD	Min	Max	Rank
10A1	30	4.03	1.38	1	7	1
10A2	30	3.23	1.41	1	6	5
10A3	30	3.47	1.57	1	7	3
10A4	31	3.35	1.50	0	7	4
10A5	29	3.21	1.37	0	6	6
10A6	31	3.58	1.69	1	7	2

As can be seen from Table 2, the average scores of all classes concentrated at a low level on the 10-point scale. This proves that the students' awareness of the cultural values of the gongs in particular, and their awareness of traditional cultural values in general, are all below average. Based on the frequency distribution range, there is no significant dispersion around the average awareness of the students. The highest score achieved by the students is 7/10 and the lowest is 0/10. The overall score of the whole grade is 3.48. To examine if there is a significant difference in students' average scores or not, the ANOVA test was employed. The results show that there is no significant difference in average scores of 3 classes 10A2, 10A4, and 10A5 ($F = 1.25$; $sig = 0.285$). Therefore, we decided to choose classes 10A2, 10A4, and 10A5 as experimental class 1 (TN1), experimental class 2 (TN2), and experimental class 3 (TN3) respectively. Experimental class 1 (10A2) is intervened by the integration of gong cultures into Civil Education as a part of this subject. Experimental class 2 (10A4) was interfered with using extracurricular activities whereas experimental class 3 (10A5) was interfered with by field trips.

The experimental results of educational measures to instill traditional cultural values in students of ethnic boarding secondary schools in the central highlands region

Pre-test results

The results concerning students' awareness of the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the pre-test are presented in Figure 1.

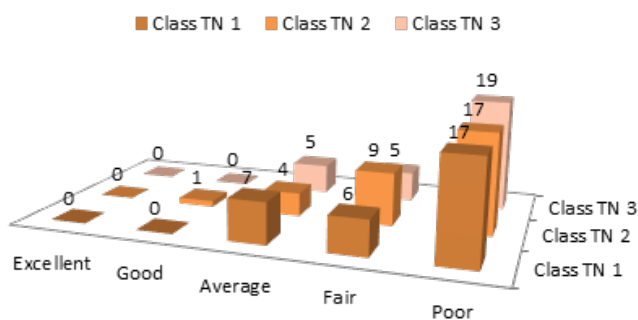


Figure 1. Students' pre-test scores

Overall, the large proportion of students' scores concentrated at the poor to fair levels. None of the students got excellent grades. Only 1 student got a good grade. 16 students (accounting for 17%) got average scores. The number of students who got fair scores is 20 students (22.2%). The remaining 53 (58.8%) of the students have poor scores.

When taking the percentage of students in each class into consideration, class TN3 had the highest number of students at the poor level. Both TN2 and TN1 classes have 17 students with poor grades. Regarding the dispersion of ratings, class TN2 has a dispersion ranging from poor to good. Meanwhile, the other two grades have only three levels from poor to average. In terms of a frequency distribution of test scores, all experimental classes have poorly concentrated peaks.

In short, all three classes have a certain similarity in the distribution of scores of the pre-test. To clarify the concentration and dispersion level of the scores, we calculated the average scores and standard deviation of all three classes. The results are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Average score and standard deviation of the pre-test

Levels	TN1 (10A2)		TN2 (10A4)		TN3 (10A5)	
	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	0	0	1	3.2	0	0
Average	7	23.3	4	12.9	5	17.3
Fair	6	20	9	29.1	5	7.3
Poor	17	56.7	17	54.8	19	65.4
Total	30	100%	31	100%	29	100%
Average	3.23 (Fair)		3.35 (Fair)		3.21 (Fair)	
SD	1.41		1.50		1.37	
ANOVA	F =1.25; sig = 0.285					

Table 3 shows that students' awareness of the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands is at a low level. Experimental class TN1 had the average score = 3.23 (SD = 1.41). Experimental class TN2 had an average score of 3.35 (SD = 1.50). Experimental class TN3 had an average score of 3.21 (SD = 1.37). In terms of standard deviation, class TN2 has the highest standard deviation. This proves that the dispersion of the pre-test scores of the TN2 class is wider than the other two classes.

Is there any difference in students' awareness of the three experimental classes? To answer this question, we performed a three-class Anova test homogeneity test. The results show that the variances of the 3 groups of classes are identical. There is no difference in awareness of students from the three experimental classes (sig = 0.285 > 0.05).

In short, based on the test results on the difference in the average awareness of classes 10A2, 10A4, and 10A5, we can confirm that there is no difference in the awareness of the cultural values of the Central Highlands gongs among the students of classes 10A2, 10A4, and 10A5.

Post-test results

The results of the post-test are presented in Figure 2 below.

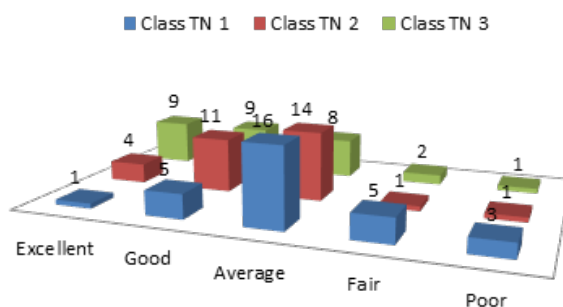


Figure 2. Students' post-test scores

As can be seen from Figure 2, the student's scores are concentrated at the average level. There are 14 students (15.5%) with excellent grades. The number of students who got a good grade was 25 (27.8%) students. The total number of students with average grades is 38 (42.2%). The number of students classified as fair is 8 students (8.9%). The remaining 5 (5.5%) students have poor grades.

Considering the proportion of students in each class, class TN1 had the highest number of students with average grades (16 students). TN2 class had 14 students and TN3 class had 8 students with average grades. In terms of a frequency distribution of test scores, class TN1 had a peak in the mean and variation in both directions. Class TN2 had a peak in the near-average level and the variation is slightly skewed in the good direction. Last but not least, class TN3 had the peak of the graph concentrated at a good level and the deviation of the graph in favor of the excellent direction.

Compared with the pre-test scores, the number of students with excellent grades increased by 14 students. The number of good students increased to 24. The number of students achieving the average grade increased by 22 students. The number of students with fair grades has decreased by 13.3% (12 students). The number of poor students decreased from 53 to 5 (reduced by 48 students, down by 53.3%).

In general, all three classes had a certain change in scores on their awareness. To clarify the concentration and dispersion level of the scores, we calculated the average score and standard deviation of all three classes. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Average score and standard deviation of the pre-test

Level	TN1 (10A2)		TN2 (10A4)		TN3 (10A5)	
	SL	%	SL	%	SL	%
Excellent	1	3,3	4	12,9	9	31,1
Good	5	16,6	11	35,5	9	31,1
Average	16	53,3	14	45,2	8	27,5
Fair	5	16,6	1	3,2	2	6,8
Poor	3	10,2	1	3,2	1	3,5
Total	30	100%	31	100%	29	100%
Average	5,37 (Average)		6,29 (Average)		6,66 (Average)	

SD	1,32	1,18	1,49
ANOVA	F = 7,31 ; sig = 0,001		

Based on Table 4, the average awareness of the students in the three classes about the gong culture is at the Average level. Specifically, class TN1 had the average score of 5.37 (rank 3) whereas class TN2 had the average score of 6.29 (rank 2), and class TN3 had the average score of 6.66 (rank 1). Thus, class TN3, in which field trips were applied when teaching the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands to students got the highest average score. Class TN1, in which the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands were taught integrally with the subject of Civil Education had the lowest average score.

Concerning Standard deviation, class TN3 had the highest standard deviation (LC = 1.49). This proves that the variation of the post-test scores of this class was wider than the other two classes (TN1: SD = 1.32; TN2: SD = 1.18).

Based on the fact that the average score of the three classes is at an average level, we have assumed that there is a difference in students' awareness of the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands in the post-test between the three experimental classes. To examine this assumption, we performed a one-way ANOVA test with LSD post-check. The result of the homogeneity test shows that the variances of the 3 classes are identical. There is a difference in the average awareness of the gong culture of the Central Highlands among the three experimental classes (F = 7.31; sig = 0.001 < 0.05).

LSD post-check shows that:

- + There is a difference in students' awareness between class TN1 and class TN2 with Mean Difference (MD) of -0.924 and sig = 0.008 < 0.05.
- + There is a difference in students' awareness between class TN1 and class TN3 (MD = - 1,289, sig = 0.000 < 0.05).
- + There is no difference in students' awareness between class TN2 and class TN3 with sig = 0.294 > 0.05.

What should be taken into consideration about the post-test results is that although there is a difference between the 3 experimental classes, when considered in pairs, there is no difference in students' awareness between class TN2 and class TN3.

In short, based on the test results above, we can confirm: the average awareness about the gong culture of the Central Highlands of the students in class TN3 and TN2 > TN1. There is no statistically significant difference in students' awareness between class TN3 and class TN2.

The effectiveness of the experimental measures

To test the effectiveness of the experimental methods on educating the students about the values of the gong culture in the Central Highlands, we calculated the effect of the average output and average input. The results of the T-test analysis of the difference between the average output and input scores are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Average score of students' awareness before and after the treatments

Class	Average score			T-test	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference	t	Sig.
	TN1	3.23	5.37		
TN2	3.35	6.29	2.94	- 8.56	0.00
TN3	3.21	6.66	3.45	- 9.15	0.00

As can be seen from Table 5, in all the three experimental classes, the differences between average score of pre-test and post-test are all positive numbers. This proves that the results of the teaching of the values of the cultural of the gongs in the Central Highlands have a higher average output than input.

In experimental class TN1, the average score of students' awareness of the pre-test is 3.23 (poor level). The measured output average score is 5.37 (average level). The average score of students' awareness in class TN1 has increased by 2.14 points. With the above score, students' awareness has improved by 2 levels from poor to average. T-test analysis shows that there is a statistically significant difference between input and output data (sig = 0.00). This proves that the treatment of educating the values of the cultural of the gongs in the Central Highlands through teaching and integrating into the subject of Civil Education has a certain level of effectiveness in enhancing students' awareness.

For experimental class TN2, the average score of the pre-test is 3.35. After organizing extracurricular activities to teach the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands, the average score of students' awareness is 6.29 (average level). The average score has increased from poor to average (increased by 2.94 points). The T-test result (t = - 8.56, sig = 0.000) reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. This proves that the treatment of educating the values of the culture of the gongs in the Central Highlands through extracurricular activities was quite effective.

Concerning experimental class TN3, the pre-test average score is 3.21 (poor level whereas the post-test average score is 6.66 (average level). The difference between the pre-test score and the post-test score is 3.45. This result shows that the third treatment, which is teaching the values of the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands through field trips, gains the highest improvement level of the three measures. We have tested the difference between the average score of pre-test and post-test to obtain the value t = - 9.15 and sig = 0.00. Since sig < 0.05, it can be affirmed that the measure of educating the values of the culture of the gongs in the Central Highlands through field trips was effective. In general, all three measures are effective in enhancing students' awareness of the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusions

Through the three experiments, we have proven that the measures to educate the values of the culture of the gongs in the Central Highlands for ethnic minority students have positive effects. Among the three measures, the method of teaching through organizing field trips has the highest average score of students' awareness, whereas the method of integrated teaching has the lowest average score. There is no difference in terms of students' awareness of students between the two methods: teaching through

the organization of extracurricular activities and the method of organizing field trips.

The results from the current study prove the effectiveness, suitability, and usefulness of educational measures on the values of the culture of the gongs in the Central Highlands for ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands.

Recommendations

The proposal of three measures to educate the traditional values of the culture of the gongs in the Central Highlands has been built based on the actual current situation and the assurance of the objective, subject, effectiveness, and efficiency. In addition, the study has met the relevance, and usefulness and ensured the promotion of students' activeness when participating in the experiment.

The three measures of educating the values of the culture of the gongs in the Central Highlands for ethnic minority students are proposed based on the approach of traditional cultural values education paths for students. That is the integration into subjects such as Literature, History, Geography, and Civil Education; education through extracurricular activities and education through field trips. It is necessary to create a favorable educational environment for students to practice and experience the traditional cultural contents of the Central Highlands, which will enhance the effectiveness of traditional cultural education for students and contribute to achieving the comprehensive education goals of current ethnic boarding schools.

The measures which are proposed in the current study belong to a system of educational measures which aims at realizing the common goals of educating students to raise their awareness of traditional cultural values set forth by the Party and State. Therefore, although the three proposed measures are different in forms of organizing, they have a reciprocal and dialectical relationship with each other. If properly organized, the above measures will have a positive effect on raising awareness among students.

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