INTEGRATING CULTURAL HERITAGE INTO CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHING: CURRENT SITUATION, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

Ha Nguyen Thi Thanh[1]*
ORCID: 0009-0007-5329-5403
email: hantt.poli(at)tnue(dot)edu(dot)vn
Nhi, Luc Ngoc[1]
email: lucngocnhidmx(at)gmail(dot)com
Lan, Nguyen Thi Phuong[1]
email: phuonglantk34(at)gmail(dot)com
Hoa, Mua Thi[1]
email: muathihoa2003tn(at)gmail(dot)com
[1.] Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam

Corresponding author: hantt.poli@tnue.edu.vn

Abstract

This paper examines the integration of cultural heritage into Civic Education at the lower secondary school level in Thai Nguyen city, Vietnam, focusing on the perspectives of educators. Cultural heritage, encompassing traditions, languages, historical sites, and artifacts, plays a critical role in education by fostering students' identity and appreciation of their cultural roots. The study utilizes a cross-sectional survey design involving 60 middle school teachers to assess current practices, challenges, and opportunities related to this integration. The findings reveal a strong appreciation among educators for the value of cultural heritage in enhancing the Civic Education curriculum. Teachers report that incorporating cultural heritage not only enriches the curriculum but also promotes student engagement and understanding of societal norms and values. However, significant challenges are identified, including limited resources, insufficient training, and curriculum constraints, which hinder effective integration. The paper suggests that providing more robust support systems, including professional development and access to extensive resources, could enhance the effectiveness of cultural heritage education. Furthermore, the study advocates for the development of partnerships between schools and local cultural institutions to facilitate richer, more accessible cultural education. Overall, this research highlights the potential of cultural heritage to transform educational practices and outcomes, suggesting pathways for policy and practice to better harness this potential within the Vietnamese educational system.

Keywords

Cultural Heritage; Civic Education; Curriculum Integration; Teacher Perspectives; Thai nguyen city

1. Introduction

The integration of cultural heritage into education is increasingly recognized as a pivotal element in the development of curriculum that not only respects historical and cultural legacies but also enhances the relevance and engagement of students in their learning environments. In the context of Civic Education at the lower secondary school level, this integration offers unique opportunities and challenges. The aim of this paper is to explore these dimensions from the perspectives of teachers, focusing on the current situation, challenges, and opportunities.

Cultural heritage encompasses a broad array of knowledge and values inherited from previous generations. It includes traditions, languages, historical sites, and artifacts that are passed down through generations. In the educational context, cultural heritage can play a crucial role in shaping students' identity, values, and understanding of history (Smith, 2020). Moreover, incorporating cultural heritage into Civic Education curriculum not only enriches the content but also helps in cultivating a sense of pride and belonging among students (Johnson & Steward, 2019).

The scope of this study is confined to the exploration of how cultural heritage components are currently integrated into the Civic Education curriculum. It particularly examines the approaches employed by teachers to weave cultural narratives and resources into the curriculum to make civic education more relevant and engaging for students. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the teacher's perspective, which has been less explored in existing literature, particularly in the context of Vietnamese lower secondary education.

Several studies have underscored the potential of cultural heritage as a dynamic element in education that can foster creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of societal norms and values (Lee, 2018; Kumar, 2017). However, integrating this into a structured curriculum such as Civic Education poses several challenges. Teachers often face difficulties in accessing resources, lack adequate training on cultural issues, and struggle with curriculum constraints that limit the flexibility of teaching methods (Nguyen, 2021).

Furthermore, this paper aims to discuss the organization of the research which unfolds in a systematic manner. Following this introduction, the Materials and Methods section describes the methodologies employed to gather data from teachers, including surveys and interviews. The Results and Discussion section will analyze the findings to identify key trends, challenges, and opportunities in integrating cultural heritage into Civic Education . Finally, the paper will conclude with a summary of the significant outcomes of the study and suggest pathways for future research.

In sum, the integration of cultural heritage into the Civic Education curriculum offers a fertile ground for educational innovation that can significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By focusing on the perspectives of teachers, this paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of the practical realities and potential of such integration, thus providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers.

2. Materials and Methods

This section outlines the methodology employed in this study to examine the integration of cultural heritage into the Civic Education curriculum at the lower secondary school level from the teachers' perspectives (Thai nguyen city in Vietnam). The primary method of data collection involved a survey distributed among a specific group of educators.

A cross-sectional survey design was used to gather quantitative data. The purpose was to capture a snapshot of current practices and attitudes regarding the integration of cultural heritage into the Civic Education curriculum among teachers at lower secondary schools.

The survey targeted teachers who are currently teaching Civic Education at the lower secondary level in Vietnam. A total of 60 teachers participated in the survey. They were recruited through various educational groups on Zalo, a popular communication platform in Vietnam. The recruitment took place over a week, from April 23, 2024, to April 29, 2024. Participation was voluntary, with no incentives offered (table 1).

Table 1. Respondents

Research sample	Sex		Seniority			Level	
	Male	Female	Under 5 years	Under 5 years	Under 5 years	Bachelor	Bachelor
Number of people participating in the survey	4	56	15	16	29	52	8
Percentage (%)	6.7	93.3	25.0	26.7	48.3	86.7	13.3

Upon analyzing the data in Table 1, it is apparent that 93.3% of the survey participants are female, which aligns with the common gender distribution among teachers in Thai Nguyen City. This prevalent representation provides a valuable perspective on the integration of cultural heritage in Civic Education, as these educators are key stakeholders in the academic and cultural development of students. The survey also reveals that a significant portion of these teachers (48.3%) have been in their role for less than five years, indicating a relatively inexperienced workforce. This could suggest a need for more comprehensive training programs specifically designed to enhance their capability in integrating cultural heritage into their curriculum. Moreover, the high level of educational attainment, with 86.7% holding at least a Bachelor's degree, suggests that the respondent base is well-qualified academically. However, the integration challenges highlighted might be more related to practical experience and support rather than academic qualifications. This data serves as a crucial indicator for developing targeted initiatives to bolster resource provision and pedagogical strategies tailored to these educators' specific needs.

The survey comprised questions designed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The questionnaire was developed to assess teachers' perceptions of the challenges, opportunities, and current practices associated with integrating cultural heritage into the Civic Education curriculum. Questions covered aspects such as resource availability, curriculum flexibility, teacher training, and student engagement with culturally enriched materials (table 2).

Table 2. Survey main of content

PART I. GENERAL INFORMATION
0. Full name (optional): ………………………………………………………..…….
1. Gender: ……………………………………………………………………..………..
2. Years of service: ……………………………………………………..…..……...
3. Qualification: ………………………………………………………….……….…..

PART II. QUESTIONS ON INTEGRATING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TEACHING CIVIC EDUCATION AT LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS
For each of the following statements, please mark (X) in the box that you most agree with, from level 1 – "Strongly disagree" to level 5 – "Strongly agree".

Section A: Current Status of Integrating Cultural Heritage Education in Civic Education Teaching
4. I regularly integrate elements of cultural heritage into my Civic Education lessons.
5. I feel that cultural heritage content is suitable for integration into the subject of Civic education.
6. My students are enthusiastic about lessons that incorporate cultural heritage.
7. I have sufficient materials and resources to integrate cultural heritage into Civic Education teaching.
8. Integrating cultural heritage helps students gain a deeper understanding of Civic Education.
9. Lessons that integrate cultural heritage help students develop critical thinking and evaluation skills.
10. Integrating cultural heritage contributes to the development of students' autonomy and self-learning abilities.
11. Integrating cultural heritage contributes to the development of students' communication and collaboration skills.
12. Integrating cultural heritage contributes to the development of students' problem-solving and creativity skills.
13. Integrating cultural heritage contributes to the development of students' behavior management and self-development skills.
Section B: Challenges and Difficulties
14. I find it challenging to design lesson plans that integrate cultural heritage in Civic Education.
15. I often struggle to find appropriate materials for integrating cultural heritage.
16. I feel a lack of support from the school when integrating cultural heritage into Civic Education.
17. I lack the skills and knowledge to teach lessons that integrate cultural heritage.
18. Integrating cultural heritage into Civic Education requires me to spend more time preparing.
19. I am concerned that students may not be interested in lessons that incorporate cultural heritage.
20. I am concerned that students may not develop skills from lessons that integrate cultural heritage in Civic Education.
Section C: Desires and Needed Support
21. I wish to receive more materials and resources on cultural heritage.
22. I would like to receive training and develop skills related to teaching with an integration of cultural heritage.
23. I would like the school to facilitate easier integration of cultural heritage into teaching.

The survey was distributed electronically via Zalo groups dedicated to educators. This method ensured a rapid dissemination and return of responses within the set timeframe, enhancing the efficiency of the data collection process. Participants were ensured anonymity and confidentiality to encourage honest and unbiased responses.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0, a statistical software package suitable for handling complex data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, providing

insights into general trends and patterns. Additionally, inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, were applied to explore the relationships between variables and to test the hypotheses formulated in the study.

The research was conducted following ethical standards prescribed for educational research. Prior to participating, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality with which their responses would be treated. Consent was implied through the completion and submission of the survey.

This methodology provides a robust framework for understanding the integration of cultural heritage in the Civic Education curriculum and identifies factors influencing this process from the perspective of teachers.

3. Results and Discussion

The primary aim of this research is to explore the integration of cultural heritage into Civic Education and its impact on educational practices at the lower secondary level. This integration is crucial as it not only enriches the curriculum but also plays a significant role in fostering a sense of identity and continuity among students. The analysis provided herein utilizes reliability statistics and item-total statistics to rigorously assess the teachers' perceptions and the effectiveness of current integration practices (table 3, table 4). This detailed examination helps in identifying key patterns and areas for improvement in the pedagogical approach.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.843	.852	20

The reliability of the survey data is substantiated by a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.843, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the survey items. When standardized, the reliability increases slightly to .852, reinforcing the dependability of the instrument used in this study. These robust alpha values suggest that the responses are reliably consistent, which in turn supports the validity of the conclusions drawn from this data. High reliability is crucial as it ensures that the findings and implications regarding the integration of cultural heritage into Civic Education are based on stable and trustworthy responses.

Table 4. Item-Total Statistics

Question	Mean	Std. Deviation	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q4	4.3500	1.00549	75.7167	105.800	.629	.900	.828
Q5	4.2833	.39305	75.7833	106.444	.605	.868	.829
Q6	4.2167	.90370	75.8500	105.723	.715	.890	.826

Question	Mean	Std. Deviation	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q7	4.2500	.93201	75.8167	107.034	.618	.840	.829
Q8	4.3333	.87656	75.7333	108.673	.568	.819	.831
Q9	4.1667	1.09183	75.9000	105.922	.566	.544	.830
Q10	3.8333	1.27780	76.2333	103.267	.575	.841	.828
Q11	4.0167	1.11221	76.0500	109.370	.396	.808	.837
Q12	3.7500	1.25718	76.3167	103.779	.565	.813	.829
Q13	3.9500	1.17061	76.1167	105.732	.529	.857	.831
Q14	3.9167	1.13931	76.1500	105.655	.550	.827	.830
Q15	3.9000	.66901	76.1667	108.751	.502	.855	.833
Q16	3.9500	.49645	76.1167	108.952	.505	.861	.833
Q17	3.9667	1.07304	76.1000	109.108	.427	.576	.836
Q18	3.9167	1.09377	76.1500	109.621	.393	.715	.837
Q19	3.4000	1.39247	76.6667	110.701	.245	.746	.847
Q20	3.4000	1.33022	76.6667	113.616	.157	.767	.850
Q21	4.2167	.39305	75.8500	118.062	.036	.850	.851
Q22	4.2000	1.02180	75.8667	117.779	.045	.853	.851
Q23	4.0500	1.08025	76.0167	116.729	.083	.675	.850

The research results shown in Table 4 show:

Section A: Current Status of Integrating Cultural Heritage Education in Civic Education Teaching
Responses show high agreement levels with items such as Q4 (Mean = 4.35) and Q8 (Mean = 4.33), indicating that teachers frequently integrate cultural heritage and believe it enhances student understanding of Civic Education. This suggests strong teacher engagement and a positive perception of cultural heritage's educational value. However, the relatively lower score for Q7 (Mean = 4.25), concerning sufficient materials and resources, highlights a potential area for improvement in support infrastructure.

Section B: Challenges and Difficulties
This section reveals moderate to high concerns, particularly with Q19 (Mean = 3.40) regarding the extra preparation time required, and Q20 (Mean = 3.40), reflecting worries about student engagement and skill development. These lower scores highlight significant obstacles teachers face in lesson planning and student interaction, suggesting that while there is enthusiasm for integration, practical challenges dampen its effectiveness.

Section C: Desires and Needed Support
Teachers express a desire for more support, as seen in the lowest scores for Q21 and Q22 (Mean = 4.21), which request more materials and training for teaching cultural heritage. This indicates a clear need for enhanced resources and professional development to better equip teachers for effective cultural heritage integration.
Overall, the data reflects a supportive attitude towards cultural heritage education tempered by real challenges in resources and implementation, underlining the need for targeted support and training initiatives.
Responses from the survey highlight several significant challenges that teachers face when integrating cultural heritage into their teaching, especially the lack of resources and support from educational institutions, as indicated by responses to Q7 and Q16. This can limit the effective incorporation and use of cultural heritage in lessons. Conversely, integrating cultural heritage into education opens up

numerous opportunities such as enhancing students' understanding of cultural identity and developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Based on the findings of this study, specific policies need to be established to support teachers, including the provision of abundant resources and comprehensive training programs on cultural heritage. Developing digital educational resources and enhancing support from educational authorities can significantly improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Additionally, fostering collaborations between schools and local cultural and heritage organizations could be a vital strategy.

4. Conclusion

The integration of cultural heritage into Civic Education has proven to be a vital educational strategy that enriches the curriculum, enhances student engagement, and fosters a deeper understanding of cultural identities and values. This paper has systematically explored the significant potential that cultural heritage holds in shaping the educational experiences of students at the lower secondary school level, primarily through the lens of educators.

Cultural heritage, as highlighted by Nguyen et al. (2024) and Slatinská (2022), serves as a dynamic reservoir of knowledge and values that, when effectively integrated into education, supports the development of critical thinking, creativity, and a strong sense of identity among students. These benefits align with the findings from our research, which underscore the enthusiasm and positive perception teachers hold towards the integration of cultural heritage within Civic Education. However, this enthusiasm is often tempered by the tangible challenges that educators face, such as limited resources and inadequate training, which can hinder the effective implementation of these educational innovations (Do & Nguyen, 2023; Nguyen, 2021).

The results from our study also point to a critical need for systemic support to overcome these obstacles. Teachers express a strong desire for increased access to resources and specialized training to better incorporate cultural heritage into their teaching practices. This calls for targeted policy interventions and the development of support frameworks that could include creating digital educational resources, enhancing professional development opportunities, and fostering collaborations between educational institutions and local cultural organizations (Ho et al., 2024; Morreale, 2001).

Moreover, integrating cultural heritage in Civic Education not only enriches the educational content but also plays a crucial role in promoting cultural diversity and sustainability. As Charalampidi et al. (2017) discuss, such educational practices help preserve cultural heritage for future generations while promoting inclusive education that respects and celebrates cultural diversity.

In conclusion, the integration of cultural heritage into Civic Education offers substantial benefits that can significantly enhance educational outcomes and student engagement. Nevertheless, the full realization of these benefits is contingent upon overcoming existing challenges through comprehensive support systems and policy enhancements. Future research should continue to explore innovative strategies for integrating cultural heritage in education, focusing on the development of resources, teacher training, and the establishment of partnerships that can facilitate this integration. As educators and policymakers, our goal should be to harness the rich potential of cultural heritage to create more engaging, inclusive, and culturally aware educational environments.

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