

Research on the Application of Local History Resources in Junior Secondary School History Classroom Instruction

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Abstract: As the new curriculum reform advances, cultivating historical core competencies has become the central objective of history education. Local history resources, which represent micro-level manifestations of the broader Chinese historical narrative within specific regions, offer unique advantages such as relevance to students' lives, concrete and vivid content, and strong potential for emotional engagement. These resources serve as vital vehicles for achieving the educational aims of history teaching. This study explores the theoretical foundations, multifaceted values, and practical implementation strategies for integrating local history resources into junior secondary school history classrooms. It begins by analyzing the pedagogical value of these resources in deepening students' connection to their hometown and nation, stimulating learning interest, fostering inquiry skills, and revitalizing historical knowledge. The paper then systematically categorizes the main types of local history resources—including physical, documentary, oral history, and intangible cultural heritage—and outlines their distinct characteristics. A multi-dimensional application model is constructed, focusing on classroom integration, thematic activities, and research-based practical learning, complemented by illustrative teaching examples. Finally, addressing practical challenges such as difficulties in resource integration, potential deviation from core teaching objectives, and limitations of traditional evaluation methods, the paper proposes countermeasures involving deepened school-based teaching research, enhanced teacher training, and the development of diversified assessment systems. The aim is to offer both theoretical reference and practical guidance for junior secondary history teachers seeking to effectively utilize local history resources to improve instructional quality.

Keywords: Local history resources; Junior secondary history instruction; Core competencies; Teaching strategies; Curriculum resource development.

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1.Introduction

The *Compulsory Education History Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)* explicitly states that the history curriculum must "cultivate students' historical core competencies and fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education," particularly emphasizing the need to "fully develop and utilize local teaching materials and community curriculum resources" ^[1]. This orientation marks a shift in history instruction from knowledge transmission toward competency-based value formation and skill development. However, traditional junior secondary history teaching often prioritizes grand narratives, which can seem abstract and remote to students due to their temporal and spatial distance. Bridging the substantial history of the nation and the world with students' lived experiences, thereby making history dynamic and relevant, presents a significant challenge in current teaching reforms. Local history—the social development history of a specific region (province, city, county, township)—serves as a concrete reflection and vivid embodiment of national history at the local level. It carries collective local memory and contains unique regional cultural genes. Introducing local history resources into the history classroom is crucial for connecting historical study to students' life worlds. By investigating local historical sites, listening to oral accounts from elders, and studying local chronicles, students can comprehend the "grand history" of the nation and the world through the tangible "small histories" surrounding them, achieving deeper integration in knowledge construction, skill development, and emotional resonance. This paper, grounded in this context, systematically examines the application value, pathways, and strategies of local history resources in junior secondary history teaching, aiming to contribute to the optimization of classroom instruction and the effective implementation of core competencies.

2.The Multiple Values of Local History Resources in Junior Secondary History Classrooms

Local history resources are not merely supplementary to the national curriculum but constitute an independent and valuable repository of instructional materials. Their application value is demonstrated in the following areas:

2.1 Deepening Local and National Identity, Reinforcing Value Foundations

Fostering affection for one's hometown and country is the ultimate aim and essence of historical core competencies. Abstract admonitions often fail to resonate deeply, whereas local history resources provide fertile ground for emotional engagement. When studying the War of Resistance against Japan, for instance, students who explore local anti-Japanese sites, memorials, and stories of hometown heroes connect the national narrative of crisis and sacrifice directly to their immediate environment. This natural progression from "love of hometown" to "love of country" helps students understand the interconnectedness of individual, community, and national destinies, thereby strengthening a sense of Chinese national identity.

2.2 Stimulating Intrinsic Motivation, Enhancing Learning Interest

Junior secondary students exhibit active curiosity but may disengage from purely theoretical instruction. The localized, concrete, and narrative nature of local history resources aligns well with their developmental needs. An ancient building, a local legend, or a museum artifact can spark curiosity. Situating historical learning within the familiar context of their hometown reduces the perceived distance of historical knowledge, transforming learning from a passive obligation to an active pursuit, thereby invigorating the history classroom.

2.3 Cultivating Investigative Skills, Promoting Knowledge-Action Integration

History is an evidence-based discipline, making the cultivation of evidential literacy paramount. Studying local history mirrors the work of historians on a manageable scale. Teachers can guide students through projects such as investigating the origin of local place names or changes in an old street, involving activities like collecting genealogies, old photographs, local chronicles, conducting oral history interviews, and field studies. This process requires students to evaluate source credibility, analyze historical value, and attempt historical reconstruction, thereby practicing critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills essential for integrating knowledge with action.

2.4 Animating Historical Knowledge, Constructing Spatio-Temporal Understanding

Establishing spatio-temporal frameworks is fundamental to grasping history. Local history resources provide tangible anchors. For example, studying the ancient southward shift of the economic center can involve exploring local canals or ancient trade routes; learning about modern industrialization can include examining local old factories and industrial heritage. Correlating macro-historical patterns with micro-level local changes helps students visualize causal relationships and understand the interplay between universal trends and local specifics, leading to a more nuanced historical perspective.

3.Main Types and Characteristics of Local History ResourcesEffective application requires a systematic understanding of available resources. Key types include:

3.1 Physical Resources:Tangible historical remains offering direct engagement.

Historic Sites and Buildings: Ancient ruins, city walls, temples, ancestral halls, former residences of notable figures, modern and contemporary significant sites (e.g., Xi'an's city walls, Suzhou's gardens, Jinggangshan revolutionary sites).

Museums and Memorial Halls: Institutions housing and displaying local historical artifacts (e.g., provincial/city/county museums, specialized memorials like the Zhang Jian Memorial Hall).

Inscriptions and Artworks: Stone steles, cliff carvings, ancient sculptures, traditional crafts serving as primary sources for local society, economy, and culture.

3.2 Documentary Resources: Written records forming the basis of historical research.

Local Chronicles: Gazetteers (provincial, prefectural, county, township) offering encyclopedic information on a locality.

Archival Materials: Documents, contracts, account books, household registers, photographs held in archives, rich in detail and authenticity.

Genealogies: Records of family lineages, figures, and events, valuable for studying social structures, migration, and customs.

Periodicals: Local newspapers and magazines from modern times onward, providing vivid glimpses into past societal life.

3.3 Oral History Resources

Accounts obtained from interviews with witnesses and participants, particularly valuable for modern/contemporary history, adding personal perspective and emotional depth (e.g., recollections of war veterans, sent-down youth, reform-era witnesses).

3.4 Intangible Cultural Heritage

Practices, expressions, knowledge, skills, and associated objects recognized as cultural heritage, such as folklore, ballads, operas, festivals, and crafts, embodying profound local cultural memory. Teachers should select and adapt these resources based on specific instructional goals and student backgrounds.

4. Application Strategies and Models for Local History Resources

Translating resources into effective practice requires structured approaches:

4.1 Classroom Integration Model: Embedding local resources into standard lessons.

Introduction: Use local stories, photos, or videos to spark interest (e.g., introducing the Opium War using local maps or figures).

Illustrating Concepts: Elucidate broad historical concepts with local cases (e.g., using local old brands or factories to explain "national capitalist development").

Extension: Assign research-based tasks or projects (e.g., investigating local old streets after studying Tang-Song commerce; "Finding Local War of Resistance Memories" after related units).

Example: For a lesson on "Changes in Social Life," design the activity "A Century in Images: Changes in My Family/Hometown Through Old Photos." Students collect old family/local photos (clothing, food, housing, transport), compare them with present-day situations in class to analyze causes of change (technology, economy, values), and culminate with an exhibition or caption writing, linking personal, local, and national history.

4.2 Thematic Activity-Based Model: Developing short series of inquiry activities around a local theme.

Theme Selection: Choose engaging, educative themes with local relevance (e.g., "Roots: Our Surnames and Migration," "Red Imprints: Local Revolution," "Urban Memory: Lost Landmarks").

Activity Design: Sequence activities including research, field visits, interviews, and product creation (e.g., for "Red Imprints," visit sites, interview descendants, write biographies or scripts).

Presentation & Evaluation: Showcase findings through diverse products (reports, documentaries, plays, maps, blogs); employ combined process and outcome assessment.

Example: Theme: "The Canal City: The Grand Canal and Local Development." Groups research: Geography (local water system changes), History (canal construction, prosperity, decline, revival), Economics (impact on local industries like rice markets), Culture (canal-related poetry/legends). Final products: interdisciplinary presentation, tourist guide, conservation proposal.

4.3 Digital Resource Repository Model

Building school-based/regional digital platforms for resource sharing and expanded learning opportunities. Students can contribute by uploading oral histories, photos, reports, creating a dynamic, sustainable resource.

5.Challenges and Countermeasures

Practical application faces several hurdles:

5.1 Challenges

*Resource Integration and Criticism:*Resources are often scattered, unsystematic, and vary in quality/authenticity, demanding significant teacher time and expertise for collection, vetting, and organization.

*Divergence from Core Objectives:*Misapplication may lead to overemphasis on local details, fragmenting content and overshadowing the national curriculum's core tenets.

*Evaluation Limitations:*Traditional assessments poorly measure competencies developed through local history projects (practical skills, attitudes, values).

5.2 Countermeasures

*Strengthen School-Based Research and Resource Platforms:*History departments should conduct thematic research, compile resource guides/case studies aligned with curriculum, and collaborate with archives, museums, and chronicles offices to build shared digital repositories.

*Enhance Teacher Training:*Improve teachers' understanding, research skills, and curriculum integration capabilities through professional development, ensuring local history serves national history learning objectives effectively.

*Develop Diversified Assessment Systems:*Incorporate performance in local history activities (participation, collaboration, reports, products) into evaluation, using portfolios, presentations, and other authentic assessment methods.

6.Conclusion

Local history resources represent a rich repository for enhancing history education, offering unique potential to engage students, develop historical skills, and strengthen local and national identity. Their thoughtful integration is a key pathway for shifting history instruction toward a competency-based paradigm. This endeavor requires a systematic effort involving educational authorities, schools, teachers, and the community. Junior secondary history teachers should actively enhance their expertise, experiment with innovative practices, and skillfully weave local history into their teaching, grounding historical learning in the soil of students' lived experiences to better achieve the mission of fostering virtue and cultivating well-rounded individuals.

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