

Between Representation and Interpretation: A Visual Deconstruction of First Grade Life Studies Textbooks

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Abstract

In this study, the visuals presented on the introductory pages of the six learning areas in the 1st grade Life Studies textbook were analyzed through the lens of Inquiry-Based Art Education (IBAE) and Eisner's art education. The introductory visuals for each learning area were analyzed using thematic analysis. Document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was employed. The textbook analyzed was the 2024 edition of the official state-approved Life Studies textbook for 1st grade. Each introductory visual was evaluated based on its openness to multiple layers of meaning and the extent to which it provides opportunities for children to ask questions and generate interpretations. Preliminary findings indicate that the majority of visuals are primarily intended to convey information visually, with limited use of open-ended designs that would invite student interpretation. Although some visuals reflect aspects of daily life, they tend to lack alternative perspectives. This restricts their potential to support inquiry-based learning within the instructional process. The findings indicate that the dominance of single-layered and directive imagery in the initial presentation of topics may constrain the potential of visuals to support student-centered inquiry. For 1st grade students who are just beginning to develop literacy skills, visuals have the potential to serve not only as content support tools but also as pedagogical instruments that foster interpretation and visual deconstruction within the learning process.

Keywords: art education; critical thinking; document analysis; inquiry-based learning; visual literacy