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Título de la tesis

Portfolios Focused on Controversial Issues to Enhance Argumentative Writing Skills

Palabras claves

Materials development
Controversial issues
Argumentative writing skills

Resumen

This study aims at showing how the development and implementation of teacher-designed portfolios, based on controversial issues, enhanced students' argumentative writing skills. This study was conducted in a state funded school in Bogota, with fifteen students from 8th grade, and followed the grounded theory approach. The data-gathering instruments were students' artifacts, in this case the portfolios based on two controversial statements, with their corresponding self-assessment sections, teachers' field notes and a rubric.

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Contenido

This document is divided into five chapters. Chapter one includes the research problem, the research question, the objectives, the related studies, and the characteristics of the context where this study took place. Chapter two presents the literature review related to the constructs of the study. Chapter three contains the methodological design, the research design and its approach, the type of study, the participants, the data gather instruments, the instructional design, the pedagogical intervention, the instructional objectives, and the innovation of the intervention. After that, it is described the theory of the nature of language and language learning, the methodological approach, the connection between the pedagogical strategy and the research inquiry, the instructional phases, a framework for the development of the proposed material, and a sample of the workshops. Chapter four contains the data analysis procedures, and the research categories and sub categories. Chapter five presents the conclusions, pedagogical implications and limitations of this study, and the suggested questions for further research.

Metodología

This is a qualitative action research because there was an observation and a description, of what the development and implementation of the teacher-designed portfolios evidenced about the enhancement of the argumentative writing in 8th grade students. This observation was done in a natural setting as the English class, in which everything was connected to the purposes of the curriculum and

the participants were the regular members of an 8th grade class. Besides, this study sets a proposal to change the realities of the class and the school where it took place. This was a cyclical process that allowed to verify if the designed material to improve students' argumentative writing skills, gave continuous information relevant for the study, or if those materials needed to be adjusted.

Conclusiones

The outcomes suggested that students responded positively to the portfolio, its contents and activities. The material facilitated to students their approach to the concepts of argumentation and fallacies, increasing the chances of obtaining argumentative short texts. The portfolio was effective and suitable because its activities provided rich and meaningful exposure to language in use, the controversial issues generated affective and cognitive engagement, and the production of short texts offered opportunities for contextualized and purposeful communication in English. The data also showed that the controversial issues triggered students' needs of expressing a point of view, and were topics that allowed the apprentices to learn how to inquire from different sources. Students developed critical thinking processes by interpreting, judging and applying multiple criteria to assume a position towards the controversial statements. Finally, students developed argumentative writing skills thanks to the progressive building of their writing in English and the input that allowed them to understand the basics of argumentation.