Chapter 60: Implementing Genius Hour Approach in Saudi Arabia Classrooms

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Chapter One

1Introduction

Genius Hour (GH) is an approach to learning that gives the students opportunities to explore their passions and interests, and it can be used in the classroom to support self-directed studying. It is an open-ended education that makes the learners solve problems they are curious about. Also, it is an inquiry-based learning (IBL) strategy. Students are guided by their interests to design their own path of study for one hour of the school day. The student projects are facilitated by the teacher to ensure they are on task (Harrington, 2017, p. 2). The roots of G.H came from Google's 20 percent time policy. Google encouraged its employees to have one day of the week to work on the projects that interested them. This policy led to have great innovations, such as Google News, Google Earth and Gmail (Juliani, 2015, p. 15).

In Genius Hour, learners choose not only what to discover but also how and why this topic is interesting to them. They are empowered to discover their curiosity about the world around them with the teacher's support, not the teacher's control. GH is a tipping point in education. It changed the learning process from just following the teacher's instructions to creating fantastic projects, so the students learn what they like rather than what is necessary to know. According to Heick (2019), there are 6 principles of GH in the classroom. First, it has a sense of purpose which means students have to look for a purpose of what they study, why they study it and then design their work. Second, the teacher's role is to let the students create their own experiences. Third, the GH is IBL because students search, blog and take notes to design the products that they present in front of the class, while other students review and evaluate these products. Furthermore, these projects are visible, so learners work on their authentic projects, then publish their work. Also,

GH promotes significant socialization. Students present their work in front of their classmates, and then share it online to the community to get a sense of purpose from their designed works. Lastly, the most important principle is the 80/20 rule. The teacher gives the learners approximately a class every week to work on the projects. For that, applying these principles makes the GH successful.

Annotated Bibliography

Juliani, A. J. (2015). *Inquiry and Innovation in the Classroom: Using 20% Time, Genius Hour, and PBL to Drive Student Success*. New York: Routledge.

Juliani describes the how-to manual on "GH, 20% time, and PBL". Also, the manual shows how to be a 21st century educator to bring innovation into the classroom and to change the way students learn. The book addresses K–12 educators who are willing to try new

approaches in their classrooms. It does a good job encouraging educators to start innovating from the bottom up instead of waiting for innovation to come from the top down. As a teacher and a researcher, this book helped me by having many practical classroom examples and ideas I can use with my students.

Harrington, P. (2017). Introducing a 'Genius Hour' Project to Enhance Collaboration for Year 6

Boys. https://www.theibsc.org/uploaded/IBSC/Action_Reseach/AR_2016-

   17/Reports/Harrington-P.Report.pdf

Harrington, P. (2017). discusses applying the GH project to 6 year-old-boys in Sydney to enhance their collaboration. The teacher discovered that the students in his school sometimes struggle with higher stakes collaborative projects. For that, he used this action research project to let the students work collaboratively with their peers by using a "GH" project. They worked in groups on their passion projects for a set amount of time weekly. They researched about their topics. Then, they presented in small groups. At the end of their project, they reflected with fun on their collaborative work. The data of this action research project was collected using ethical qualitative methods. Pre and post action surveys were conducted using a Likert-style scale. Also, semi-structured interviews, teacher's observations, and photo elicitation were used effectively. It was a successful learning experience for the students. They were motivated by the GH concept. This article helped me in writing my research paper. Although, it is too specific because it applied only to 6-year-old boys, but it could be applied for other ages as well. Also, it is well-organized research because its ideas are well written and organized carefully.

Chapter Two

Research Methods

Data Collection

Instrument

   I interviewed two teachers, Mr. A.J. Juliani and Mrs. Jessica Mattson. Mr. A.J. Juliani is a K-12 Technology Staff Developer at Wissahickon School District in Philadelphia and the cofounder and chief and editor of "Education is My Life'. He also spends time working as a consultant, writing curriculum, and blogging at AJJULIANI.com. On the other hand, Mrs.

Jessica Mattson is the Department Head for English Language Arts at Parkview High school in

Springfield. Also, I interviewed Dr. Eric Ramsey, the principal of Parkview High school in

Springfield.   I interviewed each of them individually, and I asked them the following questions: *How long have you been working as a teacher? and Where?

   *What do you think of Genius Hour?

   *What is GH in your opinion?

   *How long have you been working with GH?

   *How often do you use GH in each semester?

*Describe the role of technology in GH?

*How do you achieve your objects while using GH?

*How do you plan for GH?

*How do you manage your classroom in GH?

In addition, I attended some Webinars about GH, presented by Mr. A.J. Juliani. From these interviews and webinars, I received a lot of information about GH.

Procedures

I interviewed Mr. A.J. Juliani by email and I also asked him questions in the chat box of his webinar. I attended 10 webinars with him about GH. He is someone who truly believes in the "inquiry-driving'' education movement. Also, I interviewed Mrs. Jessica Mattson. She sometimes applies the IBL in her classes. The interview lasted for 22 minutes and was conducted in her classroom during her conference time. Then, I interviewed Dr. Eric Ramsey, the principal of Parkview High school for 30 minutes at his office. The Parkview High school teachers and the administrator were invited to my online project presentation to share my research results with them. After having a complete understanding of GH, I formed some questions in Google Forms, and then sent the Form to the Saudi teachers to answer it.

Data Analysis

The teachers I interviewed said the same thing about GH and IBL. The things they mostly agreed about are the positive impact of GH for the students, and how it helps the students' learning to improve. The interviewees gave me clear answers and the webinars gave me detailed information about GH and how to implement it in my classrooms. On the other hand, the participants of my Google Form agreed that having almost a class every week will give the students opportunity to work on their projects effectively. They also strongly agreed that when the students pick their topics, research about these topics, and have enough time to work on their projects, they will do better in their presentations which means they will learn better too.

I applied my Google Form questionnaire online to 140 Saudi teachers and these are the results in pie charts:
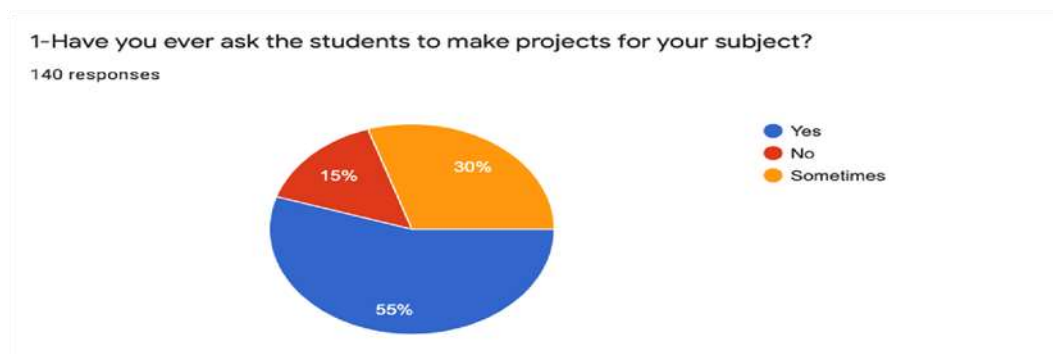
Pic 1: The Pie Chart of the First

Question in My Google Form.

Questionnaire

2-Is there a specific class in your Syllabus Distribution to let the students work on these projects?
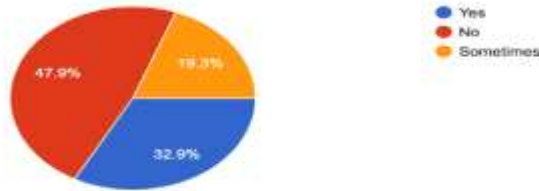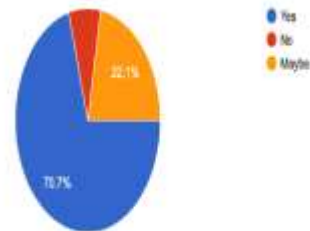
140 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

47.9%
19.3%
32.9%

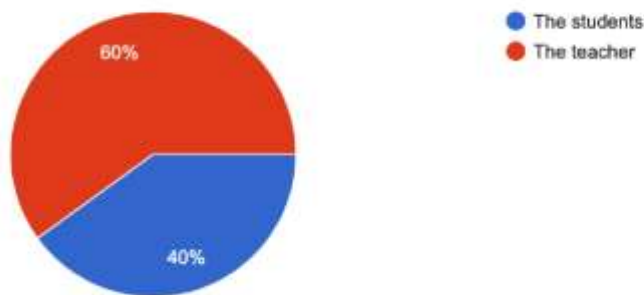| |
| --- |
| Chart of the Second Question in My Google Form Questionnaire |
| Pic 3: The Pie Chart of the Third Question in My Google Form Questionnaire |
| Pic 4: The Pie Chart of the Forth Question in My Google Form |

3-Do you agree that having almost a class every week will give the students opportunity to work on their projects effectively?
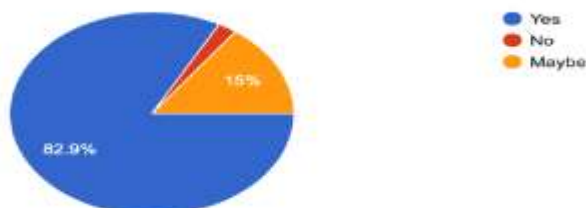
140 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

22.1%
70.7%

4-Who chooses the topics of these projects?

140 responses

- The students
- The teacher

60%
40%

5-Do you agree that if the students pick their topics, research about these topics, and have enough time to work on their projects, they will do better in their presentations which leads to a better understanding?

140 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

15%
82.9%

Questionnaire

Pic 5: The Pie Chart of the Fifth

Question in My Google Form

Questionnaire

Discussion

The most attractive statement is when Juliani said that teachers and students love GH because it allows the students to dive deep into their passions, and traditional schooling does not do that. This reminds me of the articles, the interviews, and the Google Form that using GH in the schools will improve the learning process positively. From the pie charts above, we can see that while about 70 percent of the teachers who participate in the questionnaire agreed that having almost at last one class every week will give the students opportunity to work on their projects effectively, just about 50 percent of them have a specific class to let the students work on their projects nowadays. Although about 80 percent of them agreed that if the students pick their topics, research about these topics, and have enough time to work on their projects, they will do better in their presentations which lead to a better understanding, just about 40 percent of the teachers practice letting the students choose their topics.

Summary

To summarize, Genius Hour replaces the focus of the learning process from the teacher to the students. It gives the students the power to discover their curiosity about the world around them. The teacher has to guide the students while the learners create their own learning projects.

The articles taught me the advantages of GH in schools and how they can improve the education. The interviewees confirmed what I read in the articles about the positive impact for GH in schools. From the interviews, the articles and the Google Form, it is clear that when the students are directly involved in the GH classes, they will have a strong motivation for their inquiry for learning and solving problems.

Chapter Three

Recommendations

Although Genius Hour differs from one school to another, the essence is the same. It is the time when the students learn and work on what has excited them most. GH could be applied in Saudi Arabia in all school grades levels. The teacher gives the students about one hour every week to discover their passion. The teacher's role is to act as a facilitator, while the learners' role is to create their own projects. Thus, the students spend time learning, researching and taking notes. After that, they start building the projects, and then the students present their works.

In fact, GH has a positive impact on students, schools and education which is the main goal for the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. As GH is student-center learning, it contributes to the pillar of thriving economy of Vision 2030 for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by preparing the students for the international labor markets.

School Implementation Plan

I will integrate G.H into my school system in my country by presenting it first to my school principal, my supervisor, and then to the training center in my city. I will meet with my school principal first and explain my project idea to her. Then I will meet the teachers in my school who teach different grades and subjects to present my project. I will show them my poster and present my vision for implementing this approach in our school. I will include my supervisor in that meeting too.

Participants / Audience

The principal, the supervisor, and the teachers in my school will be involved in my project. I will start by implementing this project in the high school level. I will start with the English subject teachers then the other teachers in my school. After a year, when the project succeeds, I will train other teachers in my district, my city, and then other cities in Saudi Arabia. I will involve the training center administration in my city as well.

Key players / support needed

The project needs to be happened by working collaboratively with my principal, my supervisor and the teachers in my school, then other schools too. Also, the project needs approval from the training center in my city to support other teachers by training courses which I will present.

Timeline

After my project is approved by the Ministry of Education and the Training Center in my city, I will start applying it in my school. It may take an academic year to implement. Then, after the project wills success, I will train other teachers in my city and other cities of Saudi Arabia.

Materials

In order to complete my project, I will need laptops for the students to search and a class each week to work on G.H projects. Also, the Training Center should help me to train the teachers by providing training courses to them.

Estimated cost

The project funding will come from Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. The project needs to provide the schools with a chrome book for each student to work on their GH projects.

It may cost 20% from each school budget.

Location and scope

This project will take place first in my school, 21st High school in Makkah. After a year we will evaluate the project by making a survey for the teachers to make sure if this project is going smoothly. When the project has been implemented successfully, we will apply this project in other schools in the districts, and then in other cities too.

Presentations / visuals

I will present G.H to my school principal and the teachers in my school by creating slides, handouts, and showing them my poster. Then we will have meetings with the

supervisor to talk about implementation. After that, I will make ongoing training presentations to the other teachers in my city, then in the other cities of Saudi Arabia.

References

[1] Harrington, P. (2017). Introducing a 'Genius Hour' Project to Enhance Collaboration for Year 6 Boys. https://www.theibsc.org/uploaded/IBSC/Action_Reseach/AR_2016-17/Reports/Harrington-P.Report.pdf

[2] Heick, T. (2019, October 30). 6 Principles of Genius Hour in The Classroom. https://teachthought.com/learning/6-principles-of-genius-hour-in-the-classroom/

[3] Juliani, A. J. (2015). Inquiry and Innovation in the Classroom: Using 20% Time, Genius Hour, and PBL to Drive Student Success. New York: Routledge.