

Summary Research Report 2: Research Design and Methodology

Research Aims

- To explore students' conceptions and political knowledge of the EU and their attitudes to Europe and the EU.
- To investigate teachers' and students' understandings of their roles and identities as EU citizens.
- To examine the impact of teachers' personal and professional identities on their role as citizenship educators.
- To find out what methods and approaches teachers use to teach citizenship and consider the perceived impact of these on students' learning.

Methods

In order to gain a deeper understanding of students' conceptual knowledge about and attitudes to the European Union and to probe how their identities and those of their teachers influence their learning, the UK TEESAEC team adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods.

First, 239 students across three Yorkshire schools were surveyed to establish conceptual knowledge about EU institutions and political processes, and to find out about their attitudes to the EU (see [Summary Research Report 1](#) for a description of the three schools). Following this survey, some students received four lessons on the EU through web-based materials and other students received four lessons on the EU through conventional classroom teaching. After these lessons, the same questionnaire was administered to the students in an attempt to measure changes in their levels of understanding and in their attitudes. In addition, this method enables researchers to look at the effect of the web-based materials on students' learning and to compare this to the effect of a conventional approach. The data are being entered into SPSS for analysis. The UK team are particularly interested in looking at the effect of national identity and ethnic background on students' conceptions of the EU and their sense of European identity and citizenship.

In the second phase, a sample of teachers from each research school was interviewed. A total of eight teacher interviews have been conducted. The interviews were semi-structured and covered the following areas: teachers' personal and professional identities as citizenship educators and their political perspectives; teachers' attitudes to and perceptions of the EU and how these impact on their pedagogy; the perceived impact on students of teachers' citizenship pedagogy (i.e. through conventional approaches to citizenship education or through web-based materials). The purpose of these interviews was to find out about teachers' professional and personal identities and how these impact on their role as citizenship educators. Information was also elicited on the methods and approaches teachers use and the perceived impact of these on students' learning. These interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Qualitative data analysis was used to code for the themes present in the data.

In the final phase of the project and after the students had completed the EU study module, interviews were held with small groups of 6-12 students. A total of five student focus groups have been conducted across the three schools. These interviews provided us with an opportunity to follow up issues relating to students' understandings of the EU, but more importantly they enabled us to explore students' identities, their attitudes to and interest in Europe and the European Union, and their perspectives on learning for citizenship.