

Summary Research Report 6: Teaching Materials on Learning for Citizenship

Research Overview

A key aim of the TEESAEC project has been to develop and test Web-based teaching materials (WebQuest) that will support teachers in their role as European Citizenship educators. We have been interested in looking at the impact on students' learning of WebQuest materials and of conventional classroom teaching where teachers find and use their own resources or make their own materials. Therefore, as part of our study, 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. A questionnaire on students' attitudes to and knowledge of the EU was administered to pupils before and after these lessons and some basic statistical analysis was conducted to consider the impact of the two approaches. Semi-structured interviews with teachers also elicited useful information on teachers' perspectives of the WebQuest materials they used.

Findings (quantitative):

Does students' knowledge of Europe improve after the WQ lessons?

On 44 questions the WQ group scored a higher percentage of correct answers at the pre-test stage than at the post-test stage. On only 8 questions did the WQ group score a higher percentage of correct answers than at the pre-test stage. For 1 question the percentage of correct answers was equal at both stages. This suggests that the webquest lessons had a negative effect on student's learning. Further statistical analysis will be undertaken in April 2009 to see whether the difference between the two stages is significant.

Does students' knowledge of Europe improve after the conventional lessons on European citizenship?

On 41 questions the CG scored a higher percentage of correct answers than at the pre-test stage than at the post-test stage. On only 9 questions did the CG score a higher percentage of correct answers at the post-test stage than at the pre-test stage. For 3 questions the percentage of correct answers was equal at both stages.

Thus, surprisingly, in both groups students seem to have become less knowledgeable of the EU over time. Possibly, fatigue has played a role here, i.e. the respondents simply grew bored of having to fill out the same questionnaire again. This seems all the more likely as the lower performance in the post-test stage was practically of the same magnitude in both groups.

How do the students in the WebQuest classes compare to those in the control group classes at both stages?

In the pre-test, on 23 questions the WQ group got a higher percentage of correct answers than the CG and the CG got a higher percentage than the WQ on 30 questions. Therefore the CG got a higher percentage of correct answers than the WQ group at the pre-test stage, but the difference does not appear to be so substantial (the CG only got a higher percentage of correct answers on just 7 questions). Further statistical analysis will be undertaken in April 2009 to calculate the statistical significance levels.

In the post-test, on 30 questions the WQ group got a higher percentage of correct answers than the CG and the CG got a higher percentage than the WQ on 21 questions. For 2 questions the percentage of correct answers for the WQ and CG were equal. Therefore the WQ group got a higher percentage of correct answers than the CG at the post-test stage,

but the difference does not appear to be so substantial (the WQ group got a higher percentage of correct answers on just 7 questions).

Findings (qualitative):

Teachers' perceptions of the WebQuest materials:

- Teachers welcome a website as a resource, and made suggestions for its improvement. The website has since been amended and can be viewed here:
<http://www.politikwiss.ph-karlsruhe.de/teesaec/index.php?lang=en>
- Teachers found the WebQuest texts dry, complicated and overly detailed, lacking differentiation.
- Teachers believe WebQuest materials discourage student interaction and discussion, and are therefore incompatible with a pedagogy which promotes student cooperation and group work.
- Teachers believe the WebQuest does not improve students' conceptual knowledge of the EU.
- Teachers believe WebQuest does not encourage critical thinking as students simply cut and pasted text.