

Research Briefing No. 6

Museum Scouts: Linking museums and schools using interactive multimedia

Key findings and implications for Policy Makers

The MuseumScouts project centred on an investigation in five different European countries into the use of an online authoring tool 'Evolution' to underpin creative projects linking museums and schools.

It was found that the combination of an authentic opportunity for learning outside the school such as a museum visit or field trip followed up with the requirement to create an interactive multimedia presentation to teach others about what you have learned on the trip on your return to class affords the opportunity for students to connect theoretical ideas with experience, to bring together and relate knowledge from different sources in a way that enables the kind of knowledge transformation(s) associated with deep learning.

The project partners' experiences suggest that the MuseumScouts museum-based, learning by teaching approach:

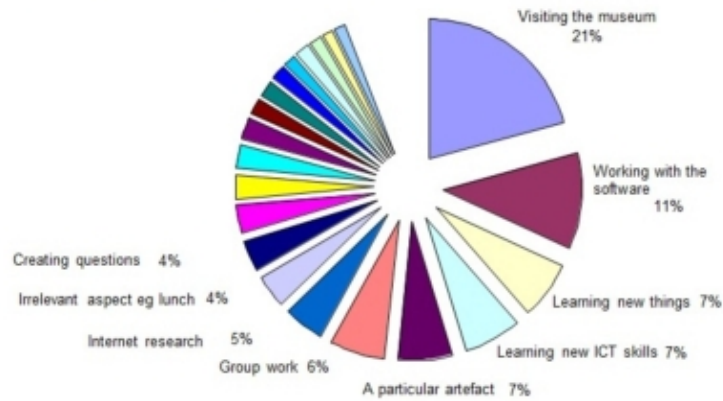
- has educational potential in the context of aims currently articulated by national governments across Europe
- enables productive relationships between schools and museums allowing learners to have access to the rich learning potential of museum collections and the expertise of museum staff
- is flexible enough to be adapted to a variety of contexts
- can facilitate learning of subject knowledge and skill in and understanding of digital technologies and multimedia production
- can positively contribute to teacher training courses



The research

The Museum Scouts project was EU Comenius 2.1 funded and involved teachers, teacher educators, museum staff, students and researchers from five European countries: Germany (Berlin and Munich), Lithuania (Vilnius), Portugal (Porto), Austria (Linz), and the UK (Bristol and London). Over two years from 2006 to 2008, the partners in the project worked with museums of different kinds, art galleries, science centres and historic buildings. In all there were 22 projects which lasted anything from a few days to more than a year. During a 'museum' visit students (10 - 19 year olds) researched specific artefacts, using a range of devices from pencil and paper to Smartphones. They then worked in teams back in school to create interactive multimedia presentations in 'Evolution', an online authoring tool, about the artefacts to inform and quiz their p

Aspects of the project most liked most by students



Results of the online survey (n=225)

Research design

The MuseumScouts project itself was funded under the Comenius 2.1 initiative on teacher training and thus focused mainly on the development of teacher education materials (now available from the project website). However evidence on the success, or otherwise, of the project was collected from a range of sources:

- students' interactive multimedia presentations;
- participant observations;
- interviews with museum staff, teachers and students and
- an online survey of students and teachers.
- partners' project reports

In all 225 students and 25 teachers participated in MuseumScouts project in the five countries involved. They visited an extensive range and variety of institutions involving national, regional and local museums as well as collections in universities and public companies. All, in general, were very supportive of MuseumScouts and willing to co-operate wherever possible.

Further information

Across the projects, whether the students had been more or less successful in creating the museum visit follow up teaching presentations in Evolution (in two cases schools reverted to Powerpoint and in one to Dreamweaver), project partners reported that students demonstrated enhanced subject knowledge and conceptual understanding. Partners reported that experience of exhibits and artefacts in the museums was not only engaging but gave abstract 'text book' ideas a real-life authenticity and enabled learners to make connections with their experiences. In Austria and Portugal where the projects were cross-curricular students were able to integrate knowledge in a meaningful way across subject areas. Also through designing a multimedia presentation students acquired and extended their skills in using ICT including, for most, developing a conceptual understanding of the design and structure of interactive digital presentations and instructional materials.

Website

<http://www.museumsscouts.org/>

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