

WEBQUEST AS AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING TOOL OF KEEPING STUDENTS MOTIVATED AND INVOLVED IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

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Introduction. At the beginning of XXI century the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the years from 2005 to 2014 the World Decade of Education for Sustainable Development [6], emphasizing that “education in all its forms and at all levels – is not only an end in itself but is also one of the most powerful instruments we have for bringing about the changes required to achieve sustainable development” [3]. Consequently, the aim of the global education campaign is as follows: “none of the talents which are hidden like buried treasure in every person must be left untapped” [4] and that really mean to teach sustainable thinking and acting at kindergartens, schools, colleges and especially higher educational establishments. Finding a way to improve the students’ potentials and prepare them for lifelong learning activities in the rapidly changing world depends on the teachers’ ability to be innovative. Only innovative educator can motivate students to look for new ways and new knowledge themselves.

Brief literature review. Motivation is the most important factor that teachers can apply in order to improve students’ learning. Many cross-disciplinary theories have been postulated to explain the nature of motivation. While each of these theories has some truth, no single theory seems to be adequately for explaining the essence of all human motivation. During the last decade this term is defined as one of the key elements to learning, because it stimulates students’ interests, supports individual and collaborative learning and can be a predictor of students’ success [5].

Determination of the problem. It is widely known that nowadays students are getting used to searching the Internet for information because they think that it is more convenient than traditional library searching. The Internet is interactive and accessible

to a large number of people at once. It has the ability to provide endless amounts of information that can be used to motivate students to conduct investigations on any given issue. That is why the aim of this paper is to put everyone in the picture about the nature of WebQuest as one of the most effective teaching tool, able to motivate students towards achieving their goals with the use of Internet.

Results. WebQuests were originally developed in 1995 by Bernie Dodge and Tom March at San Diego State University [1] and since then has become increasingly popular all over the world. They are traditionally described as online curriculum modules which engage students in learning process about an actual problem and provide teachers with an instructional framework to create an expressive learning activities.

The most common components of a WebQuest include [2]:

1. An introduction that sets the stage and provides some background information.
2. A task that is interesting and doable for each student. In most cases, a single question is posed that requires students to analyze a vast variety of information.
3. A set of information sources needed to complete the assigned task. Information sources might include web documents, searchable databases, scientific journals, books and other documents, available in the learner's setting. In this context it should be noted that teachers have to be careful about the web page list they offer to their students, for this reason they should always analyze each website by checking the URL, in order to know about the quality of the website and what it really contains.
4. A description of the process the learners should go through in accomplishing the task. The process should be broken out into clearly described elements.
5. An evaluation that tells learners how they would be graded for the completed task.
6. A conclusion that reminds the students about what they've learned and perhaps encourages them to extend the experience into other domains. To receive feedback, teachers can survey their students about their impressions of the work done.

In general, WebQuest is a significant teaching tool for teachers who want to motivate students to think more creatively and move beyond simple obtaining of information. Considering this fact, we are confident that a well-designed WebQuest

enforces each student to transform the information he or she have examined into another form, for example, a solution to an important problem; a synthesis of ideas related to a certain issue and so on. Acquired information is used to modify students' understanding of the proposed issue and through this process of assimilation, any idea becomes more complicated and with appropriate support, students develop critical insight as their understanding increases in depth and even smallest detail.

Based on research findings, it should be mentioned that WebQuest's main theoretical background lay on a numerous theories that include the following research areas: constructivism philosophy (students must construct their own understanding and knowledge of the issue); critical and creative thinking and understanding; meaningfulness of the learning process (students must pay attention to what they are doing); differentiation (different information sources must be provided to meet various needs and interests of the students).

Conclusions and perspectives. Through this research we have come to certain conclusions. First of all, WebQuest increases students' motivation because it provides a stimulating task, using information from the web links, provided by teacher. Allowing students to take different roles, relative to an actual and original problem, WebQuest creates an opportunity for each student to contribute to the understanding of the issues with substantial depth. At the same time through the WebQuests students are able to travel around the whole world and visualize things from a distant time in the past.

This innovative teaching tool is a way of keeping students motivated and involved in the lifelong learning activities. One of the best ways of using WebQuests in higher educational establishments is to help students to use their intellectual skills involved in the learning process, instead of being concern in memorizing data and important dates.

WebQuests are easy to use and to create, and teacher's role is to guide students through a specific issue, related to the learning process, and help them to complete an assigned task, to provide instructions for grading students, and to give them the real chance to share what they have independently obtained with other students. Creating and improving WebQuests is a complicated process that embraces careful planning by

putting in perspective all factors that may influence the students' learning.

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Abstract

The given paper is dedicated to the determination of the theoretical aspects of WebQuest as one of the most effective teaching tool, able to motivate students towards achieving their goals with the use of information from the web links, provided by teacher. Considerable attention is given to the structure of the typical WebQuest, which consists of several important parts. The results confirm that this useful teaching tool is a suitable integrated way to immerse the student in a real professional environment. Finally, it is noted that each WebQuest offers an opportunity for educators to explore content resources on the net in order to integrate them in classroom instruction at low cost. By the way, WebQuest has a certain pedagogical value, because it promotes the development of student skills to deal appropriately with a great amount of information, generated on the Internet.

Keywords: *global education campaign, Internet, lifelong learning activities, student's motivation, WebQuest.*