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Evaluating the effects of project-based history learning on the interests, affinities, and knowledge of elementary school students

Abstract

Project-based learning is a promising teaching method that has the potential to equip students with the knowledge and skills of the 21st century. This form of learning is directed towards critical thinking and problem solving, involves students to a greater extent, and results in better-quality knowledge. The evaluation of project-based learning in the field of history was carried out using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A quasi-experiment was conducted on 144 fifth and sixth grade elementary school students in school years 2014/15 and 2015/16 in their regular history and arts classes. The treatment group attended a project-based learning programme that included active student workshops and field lessons, while the control group studied according to the standard programme. At the end of the programme, the group that attended project classes had stronger interests and affinities towards history and archaeological heritage (fifth grade = 2.47; $p < 0.05$) (sixth grade = 2.15; $p < 0.05$). The knowledge of the treatment group was significantly better after the fifth grade ($t = 2.12$; $p < 0.05$), while after the sixth grade the difference was insignificant ($t = 1.63$; $p = 0.11$). The qualitative part of the research has shown that project-based teaching contributes to student motivation and engagement to a greater extent.

Keywords: archaeology, assessment in project-based learning, history, life-long learning, project-based learning, students' motivation