

Integrating the Use of Learning Objects from Virtual Museums in Canada Amongst Francophone Teachers at the Elementary and Secondary Levels: a Pan-Canadian Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Background

For Francophone teachers in Canada, online French-language resources—which includes Internet accessible educational materials provided by virtual museums for free—are essential to help reach learning objectives and develop skills identified in school curricula. In a minority Francophone setting, these are increasingly important to compensate the absence of available French-language resources that would support teachers in achieving their teaching goals in this minority language.

Goal and objectives

While online learning objects provided by museums can be useful in a minority as well as a majority Francophone setting, their integration in teaching practices nevertheless represent important challenges to teachers. With this in mind, our research aims to discover and understand issues in regards to integrating the use of learning objects provided online by Canadian virtual museums to the various curriculum subjects, by Francophone teachers in both elementary and secondary schools in Canada. Developing a better understanding and knowledge of these issues is essential in order to meet the needs of teachers.

The main research question is: What issues affect the integration of French-language learning objects from Canadian virtual museums made freely available online for use by Francophone teachers in both elementary- and secondary-schools in Canada? The secondary questions are: What is the value and importance of learning objects to learning programs? What conditions enable the integration of learning objects for use in teaching? What are the means and purposes of using learning objects for teachers? What are the barriers and obstacles affecting the use of learning objects? What are the teaching philosophy and concept linked to integrating the use of learning objects?

Results

As this research was drawing to a close, the results yielded by the quantitative data collection were presented, analyzed and interpreted. Canadian virtual museums were sure to find these findings interesting for they reaffirm the value and importance of the learning objects provided to respondents. Those respondents also felt confident about the level of the French language used and the relevance of the content to class preparation as well as for the teaching-learning process and personal use.

Even with average skills for locating learning objects, respondents agree this action is made easier by the indexation process they are submitted to, using internationally recognized standards. Despite the fact that respondents in the sample make relative use of the learning objects for class preparation, teaching-learning or personal ends, the way they use them is

basically for viewing, for image use, or for the adaptation of the learning activities content. They also use the proposed assessment activities, with the intent of having students work in groups.

Respondents agree that barriers and obstacles encountered (workload issues, lack of computer equipment available in class and class level taught, as in junior kindergarten for example), have less to do with the learning objects themselves than they do with organizational or mechanical issues among newcomers to the teaching profession. Also, respondents acknowledge that learning objects contributes to the knowledge required for teaching certain subjects, as well as for understanding school curricula, computer equipment, information and communications technology (ICT) in education, and students. Respondents also recognize the role of learning objects in developing the skills necessary for class preparation and for using computer equipment. Learning objects also improve the respondents' attitude in regards to teaching-learning, ICT in education, students and computer equipment.

Finally, results confirm that respondents from the sample change their teaching philosophy very little in regards to using learning objects, whether for class preparation or teaching-learning. However, these results concur with the fact that learning objects are not used often by respondents.

Conclusion

Amongst those who change their teaching philosophy the most, the results indicate the fact that they neither use the most advanced functions of ICTs in education for class preparation nor for teaching-learning.

Those respondents that effect the greatest changes to their concept of teaching in high school are, in decreasing order, teachers in plastic arts, career counselling, mathematics, humanities and social sciences, natural sciences, French as mother tongue, physical education and health, and English as a second language, followed by elementary level teachers (in many subjects).

As such, respondents acknowledge that learning objects from Canadian virtual museums are good supplementary virtual resources, for class preparation and teaching-learning at the elementary and secondary levels. For all these reasons, in addition to meeting teachers' needs, learning objects offer great potential to preserve the Francophone language and identity for the next generation of students living in a minority setting in Canada.