

Project Context - Research

De Tocht



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Introduction

We are currently working on a game for a project called “Context”. The assignment is commissioned by the open air museum in Arnhem in Netherland. The assignment is to make an educational game with a digital component about the second world war in Netherland. The purpose is to make students experience what it was like to be a kid near the end of the war. As well as to see how they react when they need to work in a group.

Before our team can decide what for a game we will make, we need to do research about our target audience. We need to know which age group is the best choice if we will make a game about the second World War.

To do this I give myself up as a volunteer to do the target audience research.

the reason why I volunteered was because I taught that I could easily ask my previous school to be able to get an interview with a teacher and some students. I also wanted to learn more about their environment.

There are several questions that we asked ourselves before I got in contact with my previous school.

Those questions became my purpose to do this research better as well to be able to get a better understanding how the students look at history as a whole.

In this research document I will talk about my several different methods and my analysis from those methods.

Last but not least I will write a conclusion about my findings, where and how it will impact my decisions in this project.

The purpose of this research

The purpose of my research is to make a choice what for a game we want to make. We might have a theme for our game but we can't start thinking of a genre before researching our target audience. We need to know what the get in history classes, which class gets what subject and how good is their school equipment.

Method

Chosen methods

for this research I chose to do all 3 forms. Interviewing, observation and desk research. The reason for this is to be able to get the best possible conclusion what we will need to do to make a better game.

I chose interview to get the fastest way of information from a teacher him/her self. Because the person that gives the lessons and knows the year program are the teachers. This way I will know which class gets the subject World War II the fastest. I can also ask more indebt questions about the different subjects within World War II.

I chose to observe a class students so that I can see how fast they lose focus. How long they can keep it up. When they will lose it and when they regain it. I also wanted to know how many of those students is interested in history and which ones aren't.

My last method desk research won't be as thoroughly as the previous methods, but it will be more used to fact check the interview the teacher. Because I can't go to all the schools in the Netherlands I can check their program with desk research.

Interview

Preparation

I started writing down questions that I wanted to know more about World War II. I showed those questions to my group, we discussed some of them added new one and ended with the final version that I included in the source as **Questions**.

After that I took the ones I thought were the most important to ask a teacher in an interview.

Once my preparation was complete I made contact with a friend of mine that is going to Thomas a Kempis college. He goes to Havo 5, Osman Bal.

Thanks to contacting Osman I was able to get in contact with his history teacher Peter Dik. Before going to Thomas a Kempis I wrote a formal mail to mister Peter Dik. Mister Dik was very enthusiastic about our project and asked me to come by at 17 February 8:15 AM.

Expectations

I did have some expectations before going to the school. Because how fast I got a reply from my formal mail and how enthusiastic the reply sounded, I hoped to be able to get honest answers as well to be able to join a classroom session. I also hoped if we got the point to be able to play test we could easily do it there.

Interview teacher

The person I had my interview with was mister Peter Dik. He is the history teacher for havo & vwo at Thomas a Kempis College in Arnhem. He gives his lectures to different classes as well. He was also my history teacher from 8 years ago.

After our greeting I started asking questions. My first question was what subjects they talk about in World War II. Mister Peter told me that they talk about 11 sub subjects. But the focus especially on the war to the west and before it actually started. The war itself doesn't get that big of a focus.

Next I wanted to know what are the difference between the first 3 years before you get your profile choice and the last 2 years after choosing a profile. The answer to that was that the government changed the exam requirements which also changes the subjects from the first 3 years and the last 2 years of havo. in the last 2 years you get everything from the start again but this time more in depth.

My next question was if there are certain things that the teacher doesn't talk about. Like drawing a line where he thinks he should not talk too much about it because it might be too much. I gave an example of talking about the holocaust. To my surprise I got the answer that he does not draw a line. He talks about everything because it is history. *"We need to know what happened even if it is bad, so we can learn not to do it again. But I'm careful with what I show, I don't want them to get scarred because of some video's or images"*

My next question was how they keep the attention in the classroom. He answered me that it can be difficult with some subjects. Like with the dark ages they don't really seem to care, but especially boys tend to like wars more. He also tries to show videos/documentaries that explain certain situations in history. He also asks them questions in a way that they will need to think and answer in a historic way. As well as giving them small assignments to make while in class.

Next I asked how many times they watch full movies or play historic games as a stimulant for the students. Here was Mister Peter a bit disappointed while answering that they almost never can. Because of the program they need to do a test after 8 weeks, which they will repeat until the finals. Because of this they don't have time to do something else than just the history lessons that they have planned. He also told me that each lesson is 60 minutes long and which he can teach just for 3 hours, 2 days a week. And this was for Havo 5 which needs to do the finals at the end of the year. Some other classes just get 1 hour a week. Those classes are even more difficult to try something new.

After hearing that I asked which class it would be the best choice to try this game that we are working on. My answer was to try it either in Havo 5 because they have more history classes in a week or Vwo because Vwo has 1 extra year.

Observation

After I finished asking the questions I had one request left to ask. I asked if it was possible to join his next lesson. I used this opportunity to join a lesson for 2 hours. In this short time period I watched the students and the teacher. I focused on how many students were in the class, how many boys/girls. Which students came to the lessons with pleasure, what did they like about history and how fast did they lose their focus. I will write down my findings in the analysis heading.

Playtest

After doing my practical research I tried to get in contact with another school. Unfortunately that school was a bit sceptical and did not want to cooperate as fast as Thomas a Kempis. Yet I did not give up hope and kept trying to get in contact. I will get my answer on March 22. Mister Peter Dik also has yet to reply to my mail to be able to play test in Thomas a Kempis.

That's why we couldn't do a play test before the deadline of this research document. But we did playtest the game in our own class. There we have several students that came from havo/vwo last year. Because of that we did a pretend playtest. We could see that we were missing sound which led to disinterest of the participants. We also had a lot of characters which was a lot to digest from the game.

We will use this to get a second version for the play test so that when we go for a real test we can do it much better.

Desk Research

Because I can't ask all the schools how they give their lessons, I needed a global picture of the education system.

Out of my own experience I know that Havo/Vwo have profile choices. After the third year students need to make a profile choice. This will later affect their carrier, because they will get specific subject within those choices. I added the information about those profiles and the subjects within source as **Profielen**. I concluded that only 2 profiles have history.

After that I found the ten periods that Havo/Vwo must do. World Wars is number 9 of the 10. After that I looked up at the official website for central exams. This website is government supported and the official information is found here: **College voor Toetsen en Examens**.

Here I found the pdf that explains how a student gets graded. By seeing how they get graded I can speculate how the lessons will be given. As well as adding the information that I got from the interview I can get a better view. History will be given in a chronological order. That why havo 5 gets the subject Word War II. **College voor Toetsen en Examens** has a pdf where they show the difference between Havo and Vwo this can be seen in Page 8. On page 18,19 and 20 you can find the context of 1871 till 1945.

With this information from the desk research I can safely assume that all schools that have havo/vwo will need to follow this format.

Analyse

In this section I will write about my findings from my 3 different methods that I used.

Interview teacher

Form the interview I concluded that they have a very strict and sort program.

The difference between Havo and Vwo is not that big, but Vwo needs to know more details as well that they have 1 extra year.

The teacher told me they don't talk about the actual war but why it started how it ended. Which lead to disappointment in some students because they are often hyped about the war.

Every 8 weeks they get a test about the subject they learned.

Because of the strict and sort program it is difficult to get a game between a lecture, but the teacher is very open minded and definitely wants to do it sometime.

Because of this information we know that we can't make a game that is longer than 1 hour. The school just does not have the time to play the game. We might be able to make a game that the students can play at home, but that will take away the applied game of it and just make it a game. It will also take away the challenge to try to get the focus of the kids in the class.

Observation in the class

Each lesson is 60 minutes long, you have even number on boys and girls. The girls are all sitting next to each other while they boys are a bit more spread out. After 30 minutes the class starts to get distracted. To counter this the teacher gives them an assignment they can work on. Which they do in groups of 2.

The school does have a blog system where you can find past lectures, yet the students still take notes.

When I looked at the smart board I saw 3 different browser types, which I can conclude that different teachers use different browsers. If we will go for a web based game we need to watch out that the website works on all browsers the same way.

At the end of the lecture I could ask some questions to at least 5 students. Not all of them like to come to history classes some of them are sort of forced because it was a mandatory subject in their profile choice.

But all of them were interested in trying something different than the normal classes. Some wanted it because they could skip a normal lecture while some wanted because they like history and want to try something different.

Available school resources

While I was observing and asking questions to the students I asked about their equipment. The school does have enough laptops or desktops to house a whole classroom, but the equipment are of old age. They also don't have flash player on it nor allot of disk/ram space.

This information is important because we need to make some aspect of the game digital. Let's say if we made the game fully digital with unity, but the laptops/desktops can't handle the game because of low ram/disk space we could not play the game there. That would make all our effort be in vain.

Playtest

From our pretend playtest in the class we could see that we had too much information. This caused confusion which led to disinterest. That which caused a bad result. But we could get positive result when they started discussing which choice the best option could be from the little information they got out of the story.

We need to give the information about the characters in a different way while keeping the discussion aspect.

Desk Research

The desk research I used to get the global picture of the education. With the interview, observation in Thomas a Kempis and this desk research I can conclude that all high schools in the Netherlands have the same program. Maybe they don't follow it 100% like Thomas a Kempis, but at the end of the year all students need to know the exact same information about history.

Because of this information we can make a game from the information we got for all high schools.

Conclusion

History is a heavy subject where students need to learn allot. The teachers are in a bind because they need to teach allot of stuff in a very short amount of time. Some teachers might try alternative way of teaching, but not all teachers are good with technology to show extra information through the internet.

Secondly not all students are willingly getting history, because they needed to choice for a specific profile they got history in that packet. This will lead in some students not giving their full attention in the class.

Because of the poor quality of equipment we have chosen to make a web based game. Because a web based game only needs internet access and a browser. We need to program a game on the web and the hosting will be done by us. That way we won't need a strong laptop/desktop to work. Another reason is because Thomas a Kempis is a school that has a lot of students, their equipment is also based on the students that pay the school money. If we want to play the game on all schools then we could find a school that even below Thomas a Kempis. To not get a problem in any school a web based game is the best solution.

Sources

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 - **Observation in the classroom** - <https://drive.google.com/open?id=124KMyqp6383IRLGdGAdhBcOZem314rTrohYIFM B4wn8>
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- **Desk research**
 - **De tien tijdvakken** – <https://www.examenoverzicht.nl/havo/geschiedenis>
 - **College voor Toetsen en Examens** - <https://www.examenblad.nl/>
 - **Geschiedenis havo Page 8 verschil tussen havo en vwo** - <http://havovwo.nl/pics/hgssyl17.pdf>
 - **4.2 Historische context Page 18, Page 19 & Page 20**- <http://havovwo.nl/pics/hgssyl17.pdf>
 - **Profielen** - <https://profielkeuze.qompas.nl/informatie/profielen-en-vakken>