Welcome to our second newsletter. In the period after our last newsletter, just two months ago, we really jumped into depth with our CHERUG games. Following our initial trials, we now did run (and are running) a number of large scale evaluations with different audiences throughout Europe ranging from nursing and medical students in Craiova (Romania), nursing students in Pori (Finland), to social science students in Paisley (Scotland). Additionally, the games were tested in small scale evaluations among others by serious games experts in Heerlen (The Netherlands). The result are positive and promising. In this newsletter we will introduce to you our (11!) games and user feedback of these evaluations. We hope it will further your interest in our work. If you want more information or want to be involved – as a student, a teacher or an institute – do not hesitate to contact us.

The CHERMUG games

The CHERMUG games are online digital games which have been designed to provide activities to support students as they learn about research methods and statistics. The games cover both quantitative (8 games) and qualitative research methods (3 games) and follow a research methods cycle which characterises the research process as a cyclical problem-solving process with different activities and tasks which are carried out at different stages in the cycle. Each game highlights specific aspects of the cycle.

The games are targeted at beginners and would be most useful for students who are taking an introductory module on research methods. The learner will need a basic understanding of terminology and concepts used in research methods before the games can be played.

The qualitative games are structured into three levels of difficulty. Level 1 is the introductory level where students develop an understanding of key differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. At levels 2 and 3 players are presented with a specific research question and a brief account of the background surrounding it and they are required to carry out exercises relating to the selection of appropriate methods and samples and to carry out some simple data analysis. They also have to carry out some qualitative coding.

The CHERMUG quantitative games centre around hypothesis testing. In each game, 8 in total, the player is presented with a series of examples which help players to address the inter-related issues which must be considered in formulating and testing a hypothesis such as: identify the key variables for the study from a given scenario; what level of measurement is appropriate for a variable; formulate the null hypothesis; and identify/interpret correctly a statistical test.

The games can be played during a tutor-led laboratory session, where each game including e.g. a round-up discussion would comfortably fit into a one hour session. Alternatively, they can be played by students alone at home as an exercise to practice concepts learned in class or for self-study. The final version of the games will be available in English, Spanish, Dutch, Romanian, Finish, French and German. The games require no IT skills beyond being able to operate a web browser.

www.chermug.eu
CHERMUG Evaluation outcomes

Pori, Finland. At SAMK 69 nursing students and two post-graduate students participated in a pilot. 50 of them played the qualitative game, 21 played the quantitative game. The students completed their studies in research methods beforehand, mainly during the school year 2012-2013. Games results (qualitative and quantitative) were saved in Moodle, in which students registered and played the game in the school computer lab. The games were in English and the students played with support of a vocabulary. After playing, the students filled out a questionnaire. In the feedback they wished that the games would have been in Finnish. Some thought that the games make learning interesting and nice, and that they are required to apply their knowledge. As a lack in the games students mentioned that they did only receive limited feedback while playing. It would be helpful to get a hint what you should do if you were stuck, and positive feedback when you played right - the selection could only be a good guess. After the summer holidays, the pilot will continue in September, aiming to reach 200 players for the games.

Paisley, Scotland. The aim of this evaluation was to get feedback about the usability of the games and the students’ perceptions on and the value of the games in supporting their learning in research methods. A total of 114 2nd year students at the University of the West of Scotland took part, taking an introductory core module in Social Science Research Methods. Students were a mixture of male and female students of all ages. The module introduced qualitative and quantitative approaches. Most students had a minimal amount of input about research methods in their first year. The teaching included six weeks on qualitative approaches followed by six weeks on quantitative approaches to research. Data were collected via a questionnaire, in addition students’ views of the game were collected by asking the students for comments as they played. They played the game in a set of lab-based revision sessions in the final week of the module. The students found the games easy to play and to navigate and felt that they helped them to learn something about research methods. They agreed that it provided a useful, alternative approach for learning: “Better than the usual approach”.

Where to meet us?

In the forthcoming period you can meet us at a number of conferences, we will have hands-on workshops and are available for questions and discussion at:

- 3-4 October 2013 at the ECGBL 2013 The 7th European Conference on Games Based Learning in Porto, Portugal.

Other conference presentations are under preparation, you will find the latest news on which conferences we will be attending at our website.

What is next?

In our next newsletter we will report in more detail on supplementing resources developed such as teacher support materials. You can find summaries of and links to all our main reports at our website.

Contact points

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