

# It's a Wired World

In her regular column dedicated to technology and the teacher trainer, Nicky Hockly looks at how teacher trainers can use **WebQuests** with their trainees.

Are you a digital native or a digital immigrant? These are terms that refer to those who grow up with technology, and those who don't. Those children, for example, who are growing up with and using technology as part of their daily lives, are digital 'natives', and those of us who have come later to technology – many teachers and trainers, for example – are digital 'immigrants'.

As time goes by, the trainees coming onto our teacher training courses are increasingly tech-savvy (knowledgeable about technology), but they are being trained by teachers who are simply not using technology in their practice, are unaware of technological developments that can be used to teach languages, and are nervous of technology.

**WebQuests** are a simple and non-threatening way for teacher trainers to start using technology with trainees. A WebQuest is simply a project which is carried out using the Internet as a resource. At the simplest level, a WebQuest can run over a single training session, with pairs or small groups of trainees researching and collating information on a single training topic, and presenting it to peers. More complex WebQuests can run over several sessions, and result in trainees presenting findings to peers in a PowerPoint presentation, on posters, or by writing assignments. These WebQuest 'products' or 'outputs' can then form part of the evaluation of trainees.

If you are a trainer considering using WebQuests as part of your training, you might be asking yourself the following questions:

## What form does a WebQuest take?

A WebQuest (WQ) will typically have four stages:

- An **Introduction** to the topic of the WQ. Thus a WQ which requires trainees to investigate different TEFL methodologies and approaches might start out by asking trainees to note down what they already know about various methodologies, or to match names to methodologies (e.g. Curran – Community Language Learning), or to identify certain techniques which they use in their own teaching, which can be later attributed to the various methodologies researched in the WQ.
- The **Task** section outlines exactly what trainees need to do in order to carry out the WQ. In the TEFL methodologies WQ example, you might provide 8 key methodologies, divide the trainees into 8 groups, and ask each group to research one methodology. Guiding questions can be given to help trainees identify key areas of the methodology to explore. Most importantly, the trainer needs to supply a short list of websites (I'd recommend two or three) for each methodology, to help the trainees with their research – obviously the trainer needs to have found these websites and evaluated their suitability for the task beforehand!
- The **Process** part of the WQ guides the trainees through the set of activities and research tasks, which have already been outlined in the Task section. Ideally carrying out the WQ should lead to some kind of 'product' or 'output', in which trainees present the results of their Internet research to the class.
- The final stage is that of **Evaluation**. This stage can involve trainees in self-evaluation, comparing and contrasting what they have produced with that of other trainees and giving feedback on what they feel they have learnt, achieved, etc. It can also

involve the trainer in evaluating trainee outputs. Some WQs will provide guidelines for both trainee self-evaluation, and trainer evaluation, often in the form of questions.

## What do I need to know or do to use a WQ?

Rather than reinventing the wheel and attempting to write an entirely new WQ yourself, it's probably best to look around on the Internet to see if there already is a WQ which suits your training needs (see the end of this article for some suggested places to look!).

Once you've found a WQ you would like to try out with a group of trainees, look at any part of the Process that you would like to change or adapt, and make sure you check all the links to see that they are still live. Also, work out exactly which parts of the WQ will require your trainees to be online, researching on the suggested websites – you'll find that most of the work of a WQ takes place in the preparation stages, and in the collating and transforming of the information into a 'product' to be shared with peers.

The online research tasks of a WQ (in the **Process** section, usually) can even be set for homework, depending on how much access your trainees have to the Internet either in your institution, or at home. In terms of 'technical skills', all you and your trainees need is to know how to visit and read websites! Try to ensure that your trainees work in pairs (or small groups) when carrying out the research for the WQ – this will ensure more interaction in the sharing of information and interpretation of findings, and hopefully also promote more in-depth, critical thinking skills and analysis.

## Where can I find WQs related to teacher training?

There are many WebQuest repositories on the Internet, but most WQs are aimed at learners of English rather than at teacher trainees. There is, however, a growing selection of WQs specifically designed for trainers on topics such as:

- TESOL methodologies
- Motivation and tasks for learners
- Authentic materials
- Writing skills and young learners

You can find these WQs here (scroll down to Teacher Training and Education): [www.theconsultants-e.com/webquests/](http://www.theconsultants-e.com/webquests/)

There is also a good selection of WQs for learners, and WQ-related resources (such as articles and evaluation rubrics) here:

<http://academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/Links/webquests.htm>



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