

Organ Donation - Opt in or Opt out????



Learning Outcomes:

The students were able to:

- ✓ Discuss the ethical issues surrounding organ donation and transplantation.
- ✓ Describe what organs are donated, their structure, function and the illnesses they are used to treat.
- ✓ Carry out a role play effectively.
- ✓ Prepare and present a report on their views on the potential impact of an opt out system of organ donation in Ireland.
- ✓ Carry out a data search, process the information, select and analyse data.
- ✓ Construct and present an argument for or against the introduction of an opt out system of organ donation in Ireland.
- ✓ Apply their scientific knowledge to and be empowered to make informed choices about organ donation.

Objectives:

- To encourage in students an attitude of scientific inquiry, curiosity & discovery through working individually & within teams.
- To develop an understanding of organ donation & knowledge about the structure & function of organs which are donated & illnesses they are used to treat.
- To give students an understanding and experience of role play.
- To enable students to become familiar with searching for information on the internet, interpreting & analysing the information they select to best answer their questions.
- To enable students to experience group work.
- To give students an opportunity to defend their ideas, discuss other ideas/ arguments & develop their ability to make informed decisions about contemporary issues.
- To give students an appreciation of the complex issues involved & the challenge of trying to reach a general consensus on the issue.
- To provide students with the experience of presenting their decisions and their arguments orally & in written format.

Background:



In order to develop science literacy, teachers need to develop teaching strategies where students can critically discuss & debate contemporary issues in science and their applications. The topic of organ donation was selected as it is a current, controversial, socio-scientific issue being mirrored in authentic media. In an effort to improve Irish donation rates, the government has pledged to replace the current opt in system – whereby a person decides to donate his/her organs – with an opt out system where consent is presumed.

This teaching module enables students to join an investigative team to assess the potential impact of an opt-out system for organ donation in Ireland and report on their findings.

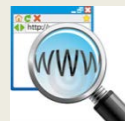
Activities:

The students are given a scenario highlighting the topical issue of organ donation & are invited to investigate the issue further.

- Investigate what organs are donated & the illnesses they are used to treat.
- Role Play.



- Data search and analysis (ICT skills).
- Critical & creative thinking.
- Presentations (ICT skills).



Results:

- Results from the study indicate the module was both highly interesting & motivational for students and teachers alike. The overall view of the teachers on the success of the teaching module was very positive, reporting that the module was well received by students, who showed high levels of interest and motivation. The module stimulated intrinsically motivated learning.
- The inquiry approach was valued by students who enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in role-play, decision-making, communication and collaboration-related activities. Such activities aroused their interest and participation. The results suggest that the majority of students feel comfortable with the change of the traditional approach to teaching & that the inquiry approach stimulates positive attitudes towards learning science

Evaluation:

- The relevance of the module to society & the students' everyday life increased enjoyment & interest in the subject which stimulated intrinsic motivation in the students.
- The teachers believe that the module reinforced learning in competency domains, enabling students to acquire knowledge, new skills & abilities.
- Teachers perceive the approach as valuable but identify two major obstacles to implementing inquiry in their lessons. The considerable amount of time required to plan and implement inquiry lessons is seen as a potential barrier and the issue of assessment also is an important factor. The traditional assessment system does not assess many of the competences and learning attributes which incorporate the PROFILES approach.
- This study highlights the important role that teachers play in increasing students' engagement which is evident in similar studies. Teachers have a key role to play in the development of science education and need support, direction and guidance if inquiry-based science education is to be implemented effectively.
- Adapting to IBL can be challenging for both teachers & students. Due consideration should be given to their training needs.



Useful Websites

The following websites contain information on organ donation issues. They were used by both students and teachers to prepare and implement this task.

- <http://www.organdonation.ie/>
- The Irish Donor Network:
<http://www.alpha1.ie/index.php/organ-donation-and-transplant/57-irish-donor-network>
- The Irish Kidney Association - www.ika.ie
- Report on Public Consultation on Consent for Organ Donation:
http://www.dohc.ie/issues/human_tissue_bill/consent_su_bmissions_overview.pdf?direct=1
- <http://www.beaumont.ie/index.jsp?p=454&n=457>
- <http://www.transplantireland.ie/>