

THE POTENTIAL OF ONLINE GAMES AS A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The popularity of computer games has attracted the attention of educationalists who are interested in finding out whether the features that make them so engaging could be captured and used to help people learn more effectively. In addition, with the growing recognition that learning is an inherently social process one particular form of computer games, massively multiplayer online games (MMOG), contain collaborative aspects that may lead to enhanced learning. In this paper we examine the relevance of computer games to Higher Education, reporting on a survey of University students' computer games behaviours, their reasons for playing computer games, and their views of the features of computer games that might be useful in learning. The survey found that computer games play an important role in students' lives with students playing for 7.5 hours per week on average and having played computer games for almost half their lives. Pleasure/relaxation, challenge/achievement, and control came out as distinct reasons for playing with challenge rated as the feature of games that might be most useful in HE. Online players played for longer and seemed to find more enjoyment in playing than those who did not play online. However, there are several factors that may impede the uptake of computer games within HE.

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