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La gamificación educativa. Una alternativa para la enseñanza creativa

Educative Gamification. An alternative to creative Learning

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Educación hoy significa mirar no solo a los contenidos que las legislaciones de cada país indican que se han de desarrollar en cada una de las diferentes etapas educativas, conlleva poner la vista en los nuevos recursos digitales que a lo largo de las últimas décadas se han ido generando. Estos son numerosos, y levantan tanto pasiones como odios, así encontramos blogs, wikis, flashmobs, cazas del tesoro, infografías, etc. que se emplean de forma dinámica por los docentes (Marín, González y Sampedro, 2014; Martín, Reche y Vilches, 2015; Molina, Valenciano & Valencia-Peri, 2015) que tratan de aportar un nuevo aire a la metodología de las aulas

Uno de esos recursos, que va haciéndose poco a poco un hueco entre los recursos tecnológicos que los profesores emplean en sus dinámicas de aula es la gamificación. Pensada como una estrategia que introduzca la conectividad y el compromiso por consolidar una comunidad, se va haciendo un hueco, poco a poco en el ámbito educativo, pudiendo hablar hoy de una línea específica de Gamificación educativa, donde los entornos formales introducen recursos propios de los no formales con el fin de potenciar un aprendizaje significativo.

Hablar hoy de "gamificación educativa", supone hacerlo de una tendencia basada en la unión del concepto de ludificación y aprendizaje. La gamificación propiamente dicha trata de potenciar procesos de aprendizaje basados en el empleo del juego, en este caso de los videojuegos para el desarrollo de procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje efectivos, los cuales faciliten la cohesión, integración, la motivación por el contenido, potenciar la creatividad de los individuos.

Por otra parte, no queremos identificar gamificación educativa con ludificación educativa, ya que aquella trata de vincular conceptos del currículo con el propio proceso de aprendizaje que los individuos desarrollan a lo largo de todo su proceso de formación. Se han de superar visiones negativas del empleo de los videojuegos en general pues una de las mayores potencialidades de estos dentro de la educación es despertar la curiosidad por conocer, por desarrollar habilidades, reforzar la autoestima, el valor uno mismo y de la comunidad,...

Pero, ¿cómo se está introduciendo en las aulas?, ¿están formados los futuros docentes para su empleo? ¿Realmente potencian el trabajo colaborativo y cooperativo así como las comunidades de aprendizaje?

Encontramos la respuesta para responder a estos interrogantes a través de 8 artículos que centra su atención en este tema.

El monográfico que a continuación presentamos se encuentra organizado en aportaciones de corte teórico y de línea investigadora que tratan de llamar la atención del lector sobre la relevancia del empleo de los videojuegos de manera educativa en las aulas.

Así dentro del primer bloque encontramos el trabajo firmado por Figueroa -*Using gamification to enhance second language learning*- quien nos acerca la enseñanza de las segundas lenguas a través de este medio. Para ello nos hace un recorrido sobre las diversas metodologías que podemos emplear para el desarrollo de los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje de otro idioma para pasar a presentar este vinculado a los videojuegos, indicando la necesidad e vincular este proceso a través de tres categorías (leaders, prizes or awards y achievements). Igualmente indica que para que el binomio L2-gamificación tenga éxito los factores personales así como la motivación son los elementos principales para que la adquisición de la segunda lengua tenga éxito. En esta línea teórica o reflexiva encontramos la aportación de Sampedro y McMullin titulado *Videjuegos para la educación inclusiva*. Las autoras ponen el acento en la necesidad de emplear estos recursos para el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva real,. Para ello ponen de manifiesto como los videojuegos sirven para la inclusión ya que proporcionan una visión de equidad, socialización e igualdad, necesarias para la inclusión de los individuos en la sociedad.

El segundo bloque de aportaciones, a su vez, puede ser organizado en dos subgrupos, artículos cuya población objeto de estudio son estudiantes universitarios y los que se centran en estudiantes de otros niveles educativos. Centrando nuestra atención en este último, por ser la única que encontramos referida a estudiantes de 3º y 5º de Educación Primaria y de 4º de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria elaborado por Saorín, Meier, de la Torre, Rivero y Melian, y titulado *Blokify: Juego de modelado e impresión en 3D quienes proponen en tableta digital para el aprendizaje de vistas normalizadas y perspectivas*, el aprendizaje de las figuras en tres dimensiones a través del empleo del videojuego Blokify, el cual presenta similitudes en su arquitectura de desarrollo a Minecraft. Tras la implementación del mismo con los estudiantes anteriormente indicados han podido concluir es una herramienta que ayuda a desarrollar las habilidades espaciales, que potencia la motivación por el uso de las tecnologías en el aula, y aportan un dato llamativo, los estudiantes de Educación Primaria mostraron habilidades que les permitieron llegar a niveles de diseño de figuras propios de otros niveles educativos más altos.

Centrándonos en la figura del estudiante universitario encontraremos 5 artículos, 3 de ellos centrados en la línea educativa y 2 en la psicológica. Así el realizado por Villalustre y del Moral, titulado *Gamificación: estrategias para optimizar el proceso de aprendizaje y la adquisición de competencias en contextos universitarios*, refleja

los resultados alcanzados en su investigación llevada a cabo con estudiantes de Grado de Pedagogía. Con estos las investigadoras tratan de determinar si los videojuegos de simulación pueden junto con su empleo a través de otras herramientas digitales tales como blogs, wikis y redes sociales pueden fomentar el trabajo colaborativo. Los resultados han demostrado que los estudiantes participantes consideran que sí, no obstante indican que su formación digital en otras aplicaciones no es tan amplia como se pensaba, dada su edad y formación previa. En esta línea encontramos el trabajo *Strategies ok work collaborative in the classroom through the design of video games*, de Muñoz, Rubio y Cruz, quienes proponen el diseño de videojuegos a través del programa CourseLab a los estudiantes de Grado de Educación Infantil. Al igual que el estudio de Villalustre y del Moral, los resultados reflejan que el empleo de los videojuegos en las aulas como estrategia metodológica puede fomentar el trabajo colaborativo entre los miembros del aula, salvo que este estará mediado por la motivación para el empleo de los estudiantes. El último artículo que estudia a los alumnos universitarios titulado *Can gamification be introduced within primary class?* es el escrito por Marín, López y Maldonado; las autoras estudian las actitudes que los maestros en formación inicial tienen ante este elemento como recurso para ser empleado en el aula. Al igual que en otros estudios, los alumnos de Grado de Educación Primaria participantes en el estudio identifican que ellos aumentan la autonomía, autoconfianza y autoestima de los estudiantes.

En lo que se refiere a la vertiente psicológica encontraremos el artículo firmado por Uz y Cagiltay (*Social interactions and games*) y el de Cleghorn y Griffiths (*Why do gamers buy 'virtual assets'? An insight in to the psychology behind purchase behaviour*). El primero de ellos desarrolla su estudio en la Universidad de Turquía, en ella nos acercan desde la perspectiva del alumnado y atendiendo al género, el tipo de personalidad de estos y su preferencia en el tipo de juego. Así los resultados preliminares arrojan que los alumnos prefieren jugar en red con sus familiares y amigos, que los alumnos más extrovertidos son los que más horas pasan jugando y que los hombres emplean más tiempo que las mujeres en ellos. En lo que se refiere al trabajo de Cleghorn y Griffiths, los autores se preguntan sobre las razones que llevan a un jugador a gastar su dinero en adquirir elementos para poder avanzar en el juego. Los resultados alcanzados girarán en torno a las variables: motivación, los beneficios sociales alcanzados y el impacto psicológico que para el sujeto implica.

Todos los artículos que conforman este monográfico presentan un aspecto en común, la motivación del sujeto para su empleo. Es por ello que consideramos que nuestras expectativas en cuanto a su empleo en las aulas debe ser abierta y favorable, tratando de eliminar su halo de negatividad y tratando de aportar y obtener de ellos todos los aspectos positivos que poseen.

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Social Interactions and Games

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Abstract

Digital games have become popular due to great technological improvements in recent years. They have been increasingly transformed from co-located experiences into multi-played, socially oriented platforms (Herodotou, 2009). Multi-User Online Games provide the opportunity to create a social environment for friendships and strengthen the relationships. However, several researchers supported the idea that gamers seeking meaningful relationships within a game environment might have problems in forming meaningful relationships in the real environment (as cited in Redmond, 2010). This study was conducted with the sample of 168 university students to explore the social interactions in and out of game environment in terms of personality type, gender and game preferences. As a result of the study, it was found that participants mostly prefer playing multi-player games with their real life friends and family members. While they tend to make friends in game environments, they do not prefer sharing sensitive issues with their gaming friends. Moreover; students who reported themselves more extraverted, spend more hours in games. This paper contributes to the debates on the impact of games on social interactions of players in and out of the game environment.

Keywords

Games, Extraversion, Social interaction, Multi-player games.

I. Introduction

Computer games which range from simple text-based games to complex 3D graphics and virtual worlds have been strongly widespread over the past decade. In the large range of games, there are many variations: First-person shooter games, strategy games, massively multiplayer online games and so on. The technological developments of the past 25 years, in particularly the internet, have revolutionized gaming. Due to greater technological improvements, digital games have been increasingly transformed from single, co-located experiences into socially oriented, multi-played platforms (Herodotou, 2009). Multiplayer online games have become popular, especially as many players spend most of their time by interacting with other online players.

Massively Multi-User Online Games (MMOGs) give opportunities for users to interact and form relationships through avatars. In these environments, there are multiple tasks or quests that need to be accomplished by different characters with various skills (Cole et al., 2007). Examples of such games are World of Warcraft, Final Fantasy, Xbox Live.

MMOG gamers interact socially in the game environment with other gamers and spend huge amounts of time while forming relationships and some of these relationships may carry on the real life relationships (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). On the other hand, several researchers claim that gamers forming relationships within a gaming environment might have problems in forming relationships in the real environment, because they may find the relationships in online environments much safer (Peters and Malesky, 2008). Some of the previous studies claim that MMOG players are introverted and lack social interaction; however, some believe that forming relationships in these environments can be accepted as the same as face-to-face relationships (Stiles, 2010). Jeng and Teng (2008) applied Five-factor model of Personality to online game play to investigate relationship between personality type and motivation for playing online games. Extraversion which is one of these five factors was identified as the strongest motivation predictor for playing online games (Park et al., 2011). This study wants to investigate experiences and social interactions of gamers in gaming environment and compare them with their real lives by taking into account gender difference. In addition, it is aimed to explore which correlations exist between personality type and gaming characteristics of gamers.

II. Literature Review

MMOGs have become popular during recent years. According to gender studies, these games are generally preferred by male gamers. Jansz and Martens (2005) noted that 96.5% of the participants in an online game study were male. However, recent studies showed that female gamers are on the rise. Interestingly, Lenhart et al. (2008) did a study by national survey of U.S. participants and found that the number of female MMOG gamers were nearly the same as the number of male gamers.

MMOGs gamers prefer spending time in game environment instead of socializing in the real environment which can be labeled as "anti-social" or "introverted" (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). Yee (2006) did a research on MMOGs and stated that they allowed new forms of social interaction and identity. According to Krotoski (2004), MMOGs encouraged group interaction and involvement which results in personal empowerment and good relationships. It is labeled as social interaction because gamers collaborate and accomplish common tasks (Cole and Griffiths, 2007). MMOGs also have multiple quests that gamers need to accomplish them collaboratively.

Online gamers can form meaningful relationships with other gamers and alter these relationships (Jansz & Martens, 2005). Cole and Griffiths (2007) made a study with 912 gamers and found that 76.2% of the males and 74.7% of the females made good friends within the game environment. Digital games can lead to a social environment in which gamers interact and form meaningful relationships (Krotoski, 2004; Weibel et al., 2007). Females and males differ in digital worlds in terms of forming relationship. Cole and Griffiths (2007) found that male gamers tended to make friends in a game environment. On the other hand, female gamers were more likely to form relationships in real environment.

On the other hand, according to a qualitative study, it was found that gamers preferred playing for hours in isolation, putting their social relations with friends and family members in game environment (Jansz & Martens, 2005). Cole and Griffiths (2007) also reported that 80% of the 912 gamers preferred playing games with their friends and family members, however in the same study it was demonstrated that only one quarter (26.3%) of 912 gamers played MMOGs with family and real-life friends. Playing games with family members may result in more cooperation and relatedness.

On the other hand, in the study of Peters and Malesky (2008) it was found that gamers who look for social connections within a game environment might have problems in forming social connections in the real environment, thus they might avoid face to face connections. In their study among players of World of Warcraft, it was found out that some gamers might have problems with rejection in the real world, thus they tend to seek social connection in a safer environment.

Several researchers claimed that personal traits play important role in game preferences and social interactions (Sheeks and Birchmeier, 2007; Park et al., 2011; Stiles, 2010). Sheeks and Birchmeier (2007) supported the idea that individuals, who showed higher levels of shyness, might demonstrate online friends "better quality friendships". On the other hand, according to Park et al. (2011), "agreeableness" and "extraversion" were identified as "strong motivation predictors" for playing online games. Extraversion which is one of the five core traits is characterized by "sociability", "talkativeness" (Jeng and Teng, 2008). Fang and Zhu (2011) also supported that digital gamers who had high extraversion score would like to play a game that requires many social interactions. If people support the idea that the game they played provides opportunities for social interactions and if they highly value these, then they will be motivated to play this type of game (Park et al., 2010).

Based on these previous studies, one of the reasons some gamers spend more time playing the game can be to avoid face-to-face relationships or interactions. On the other hand, gamers seeking social connections within a game environment might have problems forming relationships in the real world, and MMOGs may encourage group interaction and involvement resulting in good friendships. Besides, teenagers who feel close to their family

members would like to play games with their family members or friends more frequently in order to share the experience with real world relationships. Extraversion as a personal trait can play role in game preference, thus the satisfaction of extraverted people obtained from playing MMOGs can motivate them to play and spend many hours in these digital environments.

The purpose of this research is to explore the social interactions that occur both within and outside of games. The development of virtual friendships can be very enjoyable for gamers, and they sometimes lead to serious real-life relationships. Another purpose of this research is to explore which correlations exist between personality type and gaming characteristics of gamers.

III. Method

a. Participants

The sample consisted of 168 university students from two state universities in Turkey. 70% were male ($n=118$) and 30% were female ($n = 50$). The first part of results explores general game preferences of all participants. In the following part, analyses were carried out with 114 participants (68%) who play computer games. The participants have age between 18 and 26 years, with the mean age of 21.8 years. Of the participants, 74% ($n =124$) were from Computer Education and Instructional Technology Department, whereas 26% ($n =44$) were from Civil Engineering Department.

b. Materials

i. Questionnaire of Social Interactions in MMOGs

The questionnaire is adopted version of Social Interactions in MMOGs developed by Cole and Griffiths (2007). The items were translated into Turkish and the questionnaire was sent to three different scientific experts in order to be evaluated and the last revisions were made using the responses and comments of the experts. The questionnaire consists of three sections which ask questions about demographic information, friendships and social interactions in game and playing games with real life friends. The items in the questionnaire are Yes/No questions.

Survey of Computer game playing characteristics and preferences

The questionnaire of "Computer game playing characteristics and preferences" developed for Turkish participants by Durdu, Hotamaroğlu and Cagiltay (2004) was used to explore the game preferences of the participants. The survey consists of 12 items which ask game preferences and characteristics of players with Yes/No questions and numerical values. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to measure internal consistency of the survey and was found .80.

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S)

The questionnaire is developed by Karancı, Dirik and Yorulmaz (2007) which is short version of Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) and translated into Turkish by Bayar (1983) for use among adults. High internal consistency scores (cronbach alpha=.78) and acceptable test-retest

reliability ($r=.84$), the Turkish version of the questionnaire is reliable. This form consists of three indices of extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and each contains 6 items. In this study, only the indice of extraversion was used, because previous studies demonstrated that extraversion as a personal trait was the strongest predictor for multiplayer online games (Jeng & Teng, 2008; Stiles, 2010; Park et al., 2011). Participants answered the items as "yes (1)" and "no (0)". The score for extraversion was between 0 and 6. Extraversion is characterized by "being outgoing, talkative, high on positive affect (feeling good), and in need of external stimulation" (Karancı, Dirik and Yorulmaz , 2007).

IV. Results

a. Hours played per week

While 32 % ($n= 54$) of the participants did not play any computer games, 68% ($n=114$) of the participants reported that they play computer games. The mean average time spent playing per week was 9 hours ($SD = 9.18$).

Independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare hours played per week for males and females. Significant difference was found between male and female participants in terms of hours played per week, $t(434) = 1.62, p=.02, <.05, \eta^2= .07$. Males ($M=7.44, SD=9.5$) played significantly more hours than females ($M=2.98, SD=4.79$) as seen in Table 1.

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
<i>Hours played per week</i>	Female	50	2.9800	4.79579	.67823
	Male	118	7.4407	9.55286	.87941

Table 1. Hours played per week

b. Game Types Preference

Games were categorized in three types which are single-player, multiplayer and both of them. Game type preferences of the players are shown in Table 2.

<i>Game Type</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Single Player</i>	38	33
<i>Multi Player</i>	24	21
<i>Both of them</i>	52	46
<i>Total</i>	114	100

Table 2. Game type preference

In terms of gender, 82% ($n=21$) of the male gamers preferred multiplayer games, however only 26% ($n=3$) of the female gamers preferred multi-player games as seen in Table 3.

<i>Game Type</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
<i>Single Player</i>	15	23	38
<i>Multi Player</i>	21	3	24
<i>Both</i>	47	5	52
<i>Total</i>	83	31	114

Table 3. Game type preference and gender

c. Feeling more yourself within the game

While 18 % ($n=21$) of the players felt more themselves within the game than they could in real life, 82 % ($n=93$) of the players stated that they did not feel themselves within the game as it is shown in Table 4.

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Yes	21	18
No	93	82
Total	114	100

Table 4. Feeling more yourself in the game

Chi-square analysis was conducted to reveal difference between “feeling more yourself in game” and gender. Significant difference was found between male and female players in terms of feeling more yourself in games ($\chi^2=3.87$, $p=.03$, $p<.05$). Male players felt more themselves in games than female players (see Table 5).

		<i>Feeling more yourself in game</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Male</i>	14	64	78
	<i>Female</i>	1	29	30
<i>Total</i>		15	93	108

Table 5. Feeling more yourself in the game and Gender

In addition, the relationship between “hours played per week” and “feeling more yourself in the game” was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was no significant relationship between the two variables ($p=.11$, $p>.05$).

d. Friendships within Multiplayer Games

According Table 6, 57 % ($n=43$) of the multiplayer gamers ($n=76$) made friends within the game. While 62% ($n=42$) of the male gamers reported that they made friend in the game, only one female gamer reported that she made friend in the game.

		<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
<i>Make Friend</i>	<i>Yes</i>	42	1	43
	<i>No</i>	26	7	33
<i>Total</i>		68	8	76

Table 6. Make friend and gender

In addition, 51% ($n=22$) of the players who made friends in the games met in real life, and that 49% ($n=21$) of them did not meet in real life. Whereas 14% ($n=6$) of the gamers who made friends within the game discussed sensitive issues with their online gaming friends, 86 % ($n=37$) of the gamers did not discuss sensitive issues with their online friends.

Correlation analysis was conducted to display the relationship between number of hours played per week and number of friends within the game. The results showed that there was no correlation between the number of hours played per week and the number of friends within the game ($p=.70$, $p>.05$).

e. Playing multi-player games with real-life friends and family members

The results showed that 85% ($n=65$) of the multiplayer gamers played with their friends or family members. In terms of gender, 88% ($n=60$) of the male multi-player gamers played with real life friends and family members as it is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Gender and playing with real life friends-family members

		<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
<i>Play with real life friends-family</i>	<i>Yes</i>	60	5	65
	<i>No</i>	8	3	11
<i>Total</i>		68	8	76

f. Personality Type and Games

The results of correlation analysis showed that there was a significant correlation between extraversion scores (EPQR) and hours played per week ($p=.01$, $p<.05$). The people who played more hours in a week had higher extraversion scores. There correlation between tow variables was positive but weak ($r=.19$).

The one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of game preference on EPQR scores. Game types were single-player, multi-player and both. There was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in EPQR scores for the three game groups: $F(2,112) = 1.09, p = .33, \eta^2 = .01$ as it is shown in Table 8.

EPQR	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	8.197	2	4.098	1.093	.339
Within Groups	416.268	112	3.750		
Total	424.465	114			

Table 8. ANOVA table of game type preference and EPQR scores

Finally, One way between groups ANOVA was conducted to explore significant differences among reason for game preference (competing, social communication, fantasy, challenge, relax) in terms of EPQR scores. There was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in EPQR scores for the five groups: $F(4,100) = .66, p = .61, \eta^2 = .03$ as it is shown in Table 9.

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	10.737	4	2.684	.669	.616
Within Groups	293.058	110	4.014		
Total	303.795	114			

Table 9. ANOVA Table of reason for game preference and EPQR scores

V. Conclusion

Male gamers spend more hours in games according to female gamers and they mostly prefer multiplayer games (Jansz and Martens, 2005; Yee, 2006). However, recent studies demonstrated that the number of female multi player game players is on the rise (Lenthart et al., 2008; Cole & Griffiths, 2007). In this study, it was found that male gamers spend significantly more hours in games according to female gamers and they mostly prefer to play multiplayer games or both of game types (single player and multiplayer). On the other hand, females mostly prefer to play single player games. This study is conducted in 2013 and game preferences according to gender still have the same tendency.

Although mean average time spent playing per week is 9; 82 % ($n=93$) of the players stated that they did not feel themselves within the game. Interestingly; this result varies by gender, thus male gamers felt themselves in the game more according to female gamers. This finding might be because of game preferences of male gamers. Multiplayer games have multiple tasks to complete and require large number of players study together to accomplish these goals which make them engage in game world and feel themselves in the games.

Multiplayer gamers can be labeled as anti-social; those players prefer to spend their most of the time in game rather than socializing in real life with real friends. However, according to Yee, 2006; Krotoski, 2004, Jansz & Martens, 2005; these games encourage group interaction

and leads to for new forms of social interaction by giving opportunity to create meaningful relationships with other players. In this study, while 57 % of the multiplayer gamers made friends in the game, 51% of them met these friends in real life. On the other hand, 86 % of them did not prefer to discuss sensitive issues with their online friends. Although nearly half of the gamers made friends in the game, they did not prefer to discuss sensitive issues with their online friends. It is not possible to claim that playing multiplayer games always result in meaningful relationships.

Gaming environment may allow family numbers to come closer to each other in a different format that foster "togetherness" and "teamwork" (Kubey & Larson, 1990; Jansz & Martens, 2005). In this study, 85% of the gamers demonstrated that they play games with real life friends and family members. In another study by Cole and Griffiths (2007), while 80% of the gamers prefer playing with real life friends and family members, only 26.3% of them play with them. Inconsistency of the results can be because of the discrepancies between the study groups.

Peters and Malesky (2008) supported the idea that gamers who look for social connections within a game environment might have problems in forming relationships in the real environment. Individuals can avoid face to face interactions, relationships or rejections and they tend to form online relationships which are much more safer (Sheeks and Birchmeier, 2007). On the other hand, several researchers demonstrated that extraversion as a personal trait is the strongest motivation predictor for playing multiplayer games (Park et al., 2011; Stiles, 2010). In this study, it was found that the people who played more hours in a week had higher extraversion scores. In other words, player who reported them extraverted spend more hours in games. This result supports the findings of Sheeks and Birchmeier, 2007; Park et al., 2011; Stiles, 2010. On the other hand, no significant difference was found between extraversion scores of gamers based on their reason for game preference (competing, social communication, fantasy, challenge, relax, refreshing effect) and also their game preference (single player, multiplayer or both of them).

To sum up, male gamers spend significantly more hours in games according to female gamers. On the other hand, while nearly half of the gamers prefer to meet their game friends in real life, they mostly do not tend to talk sensitive issues with them. In terms of personal trait; extraverted people tends to spend more hours in games however there is no correlation between game preference and extraversion. The idea that "individuals, who demonstrated higher levels of shyness, might demonstrate online friends "better quality friendships"" is disregarded in this study. In conclusion, gamers tend to play online multiplayer games and they mostly prefer playing with their real life friends and family members. It cannot be claimed that multiplayer games are the environments for shy or introverted people who cannot make social relationships in real life. Game environment is the space for gamers to interact and collaborate with their real life friends and family members, thus they mostly prefer to play with them.

In future studies, the relationships of the players can be explored elaborately. Qualitative research design can be conducted to examine the meaningfulness of the relationships. Social interactions in games and out of games can be explored in terms of different variables such as educational background, social status, relationships with family members, age and so on.

One limitation of this research is the possible defensiveness of the participants. Defensiveness is one of the problems in self-report studies. In the present study, participants

might want to be seen extraverted, so that they may have pointed out fewer problems than that they really have. The other limitation of the study is the participants are from only two departments which are Computer Education and Instructional Technology and Civil Engineering. Convenient sampling was used and in the future studies the study can be replicated with students from various majors. The last limitation of the study is the number of female participants. Analyses run comparing female and male participants are of very limited validity, given the extremely low number of females.

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Gamificación: Estrategia para optimizar el proceso de aprendizaje y la adquisición de competencias en contextos universitarios

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Resumen

La práctica sobre Diseño de Proyectos Socio-educativos (Grado de Pedagogía) adoptó como estrategia formativa un juego de simulación social, donde los estudiantes (N=161) debían elaborar colaborativamente un plan de intervención para promover el desarrollo sostenible en un contexto rural. Distribuidos aleatoriamente en tres grupos, con variantes relativas a las herramientas digitales utilizadas para colaborar: 1) *blogs*, 2) *wikis*, ó 3) redes sociales, y tras su realización, se les solicitó que identificaran -mediante un cuestionario- las competencias genéricas que consideraron haber adquirido y/o consolidado con el proceso de gamificación. El análisis comparativo entre los distintos grupos y el contraste de hipótesis correspondiente evidenció diferencias significativas. Los que utilizaron las wikis y redes sociales percibieron un incremento en su competencia para la *comunicación escrita y sus habilidades para recoger, organizar y gestionar información* con la simulación propuesta. Igualmente, los que carecían de experiencia para elaborar proyectos colaborativos con el uso de TIC vieron mejorada su competencia digital. Además, se constató que la utilización de mecánicas de juego al servicio del aprendizaje no sólo incrementó su motivación y nivel de satisfacción con la realización del proyecto solicitado, sino que potenció la adquisición y desarrollo de competencias genéricas claves.

Palabras clave

Gamificación, competencias, aprendizaje por proyectos, nivel de satisfacción, herramientas digitales, trabajo colaborativo

Gamification: strategies to optimize learning process and the acquisition of skills in university contexts

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Abstract

Practice on Design of Socio-Educational Projects (Degree of Education) training strategy adopted as a game of social simulation, where students (N = 161) were to design their own project of sustainable development in rural areas was adopted. They were divided into three groups, which introduced variants in relation to digital tools used for collaboration: 1) blog, 2) wikis, and 3) social networking, and after completing its realization is asked to identify, through a questionnaire, generic competences considered to have acquired and / or consolidated with gamification process in which they actively participated. The comparative analysis between groups and contrast corresponding hypothesis showed significant difference. Those who used the wikis and social networks perceived an increase in their competences for written communication and skills to collect, organize and manage information with simulation. Similarly, students who lacked experience in developing collaborative projects with the use of ICT improved their digital competition. Furthermore, it was found that the use of game mechanics in support of learning not only increased their motivation and level of satisfaction with the project, but the acquisition and development of key generic competences are enhanced.

Keywords

Gamification, competences, project learning, satisfaction, digital tools, collaborative work.

I. Introducción

En los últimos años se ha consolidado la tendencia de aprovechar los componentes motivadores propios de los escenarios de juego trasladándolos a contextos formales no lúdicos, fenómeno denominado *gamificación* -traducido literalmente del inglés-, con el fin de implicar a los usuarios en procesos complejos y predisponerlos favorablemente hacia la adquisición de aprendizajes de diversa índole. Distintos campos han adoptado esta estrategia con fines variados: modelado de la conducta de los usuarios en tanto consumidores a través del *advergaming* (Méndiz-Noguero, 2010), para activar su conciencia social (Quintana, 2014), como práctica formativa en el ámbito empresarial (Varela, 2013), en la enseñanza de otras lenguas (Mazur, Rzepka & Araki, 2011), etc.; convirtiendo a las personas en jugadores activos, sumergiéndoles en entornos lúdicos y enfrentándoles a retos y misiones atractivas que les envuelven emocionalmente, aumentando su nivel de compromiso con las tareas propuestas e incrementando su participación en actividades diversas, utilizando estrategias similares a las adoptadas en los juegos competitivos.

En este sentido, se puede considerar que los contextos formativos están *gamificados* en tanto se produce una transposición de sesiones de aprendizaje a un ambiente semejante al de un videojuego, en donde existen premios o *badges*, se asignan puntos, se superan diferentes niveles, etc., de forma parecida a como sucede en los videojuegos (Deterding, Sicart, Nacke, O'Hara & Dixon, 2011). Si bien el término *gamificación*, genéricamente hace referencia a la aplicación de mecánicas de juego a ámbitos que no son propiamente de juego, con el fin de estimular tanto la competencia como la cooperación entre jugadores (Kapp, 2012), llevado al terreno educativo, puede identificarse con el diseño de escenarios de aprendizaje integrados por propuestas de ingeniosas y atractivas actividades que promuevan la resolución de tareas de forma innovadora y colaborativa (Lee & Hammer, 2011), alentando a la superación de retos y al logro de nuevas cotas de competencia para los estudiantes.

Más concretamente, la *gamificación* referida al nivel universitario remite a aquellas iniciativas orientadas a incrementar la motivación de los discentes a partir de la propuesta de experiencias de juego en contextos formativos, propiciando un entorno favorable para el desarrollo de habilidades y aprendizajes de diverso tipo, minimizando el esfuerzo cognitivo que pudieran conllevar, y sobre todo buscando una mayor implicación de los sujetos a partir de un clima de competitividad y/o cooperación orientado al logro de objetivos educativos determinados, de modo semejante a como lo hacen los videojuegos (Del Moral, 2014).

Así pues, el fenómeno de la *gamificación* no deja indiferente a las prácticas formativas universitarias de distintas titulaciones, hay experiencias exitosas de aprendizaje relacionadas con el *marketing*, recursos humanos, gestión de relaciones con clientes, e incluso, dirigidas a la formación de directivos (Cortizo, Carrero, Monsalve, Velasco, Díaz & Pérez-Martín, 2011); en el ámbito bio-sanitario, hay casos de prácticas gamificadas en las aulas y laboratorios con resultados muy positivos (Prieto, Díaz, Monserrat & Reyes, 2014), etc., en todas ellas se están adoptando estrategias que pasan por la utilización de los clásicos formatos de entretenimiento digital o videojuegos en tanto catalizadores de los procesos de aprendizaje. La gamificación también alcanza al diseño de materiales didácticos como los libros digitales, cada vez más interactivos y enriquecidos con recursos multimedia que convierten el aprendizaje en una actividad lúdica (Area, González & Mora, 2015).

Las diferentes experiencias innovadoras implementadas en aulas universitarias coinciden en incorporar los ingredientes propios de los escenarios lúdicos, proponiendo a los estudiantes la resolución de problemas, elaboración de proyectos, realización de misiones o actividades de distinta índole siguiendo unos hitos (Fitz-Walter, Tjondronegoro & Wyeth, 2011), es decir, adoptando la mecánica propia de los juegos convencionales, estableciendo unos niveles que deben alcanzarse junto a la asignación de puntuaciones a cada reto superado (O'Donovan, Gain & Marais, 2013). Además, de presentar unas dinámicas de juego específicas que regulan las actuaciones de los estudiantes, que contribuyen a visibilizar los productos finales solicitados así como los modos de alcanzarlos, bien sea de forma individual o constituyéndose en equipos, con ánimo de alentar la competitividad (Villagrasa, Fonseca, Romo & Redondo, 2014), garantizando el incremento de la motivación tanto extrínseca como intrínseca de éstos y propiciando la inmersión en las tareas propuestas (Papastergiou, 2009; Hamari, Koivisto & Sarsa, 2014). Otros utilizan la gamificación como instrumento para el diagnóstico de la incorporación de las TIC al ámbito académico (Karam, Buitrago, Fagua & Romero, 2013), o para fomentar una evaluación centrada en el logro de objetivos e incorporando un *feed-back* dinámico y adaptativo (Del Pino, 2015).

De acuerdo con Gallego, Villagrà, Satorre, Compañ, Molina y Llorens (2014), y desde el convencimiento del potencial educativo de esta novedosa estrategia, a continuación se describe una práctica formativa gamificada implementada en el contexto universitario virtual de una asignatura del Grado de Pedagogía, donde a partir de los resultados obtenidos y tras consultar a los estudiantes participantes en la misma, se puede inferir su eficacia vinculada a su consideración sobre las competencias adquiridas tras su realización.

II. El sistema de gamificación en la experiencia llevada

a. El juego de simulación utilizado como potenciador de la motivación

La propuesta llevada a cabo en una asignatura optativa del Grado de Pedagogía, impartida de forma semipresencial, se apoya en un juego de simulación donde los universitarios tienen que diseñar y planificar un proyecto de intervención educativo orientado al desarrollo rural, trabajando conceptos básicos de economía, desarrollo sostenible, respeto por el entorno, promoción del medio rural, organización y gestión de recursos humanos y materiales, etc. Concretamente, para su presentación se adoptó como estrategia la simulación en tanto fórmula de aprendizaje eficaz y motivadora. Virtualmente se sitúa a los estudiantes en un escenario que emula un contexto rural real, recreando sus complejas problemáticas, las cuales exigen tomas de decisiones eficaces para su resolución. Con la simulación se busca favorecer el *engagement* –enganche, traducción literal del inglés- o “compromiso” de los discentes con su proceso de aprendizaje y, en concreto, con la ejecución de la tarea propuesta, de modo similar como sucede con los videojuegos, participando en primera persona y asignándoles la responsabilidad de acometer un proyecto que contribuya al desarrollo del contexto presentado (Muntean, 2011), pues de ellos dependerá su éxito o fracaso. Así pues, se trata de una práctica innovadora gamificada, que toma como punto de partida la simulación y está ligada a la consecución de los objetivos de la asignatura, orientada a cualificarles para su futuro desempeño profesional que potencia la adquisición de competencias específicas de la titulación.

Para desarrollar el proyecto de intervención educativo solicitado se intenta convertir la práctica en una experiencia lúdica para los estudiantes, para lo cual se incorporan los elementos propios que definen un contexto de juego, es decir, se adoptan las claves de un sistema gamificado. Para ello, en un entorno digital e interactivo se presentan los elementos básicos del proyecto a modo de juego, tales como la misión a desarrollar, las reglas a seguir, los puntos a obtener, los desafíos a superar, etc. los cuales se presentan con mayor detalle a continuación.

b. Mecánicas de juego utilizadas en la experiencia llevada a cabo

Para incrementar tanto la motivación de los estudiantes como su implicación (*engagement*) en el proyecto se adoptan estrategias propias de las mecánicas de juego, capaces de crear experiencias lúdico-didácticas que puedan optimizar los resultados de aprendizaje, tales como:

- *Descripción de la misión, reto o desafío:* al inicio del juego se sumerge a los estudiantes en un entorno similar al videojuego "Los Sims", invitándoles a afrontar el reto de diseñar un proyecto de intervención orientado al desarrollo y la promoción socio-cultural y educativa de un ámbito rural desfavorecido. Para ello, se presenta un clip animado donde se utilizan diversos elementos multimedia para proponer la *misión* mediante la cual se pretende que adquieran ciertas habilidades y capacidades inherentes al objetivo final del proyecto. De este modo, se efectúa un recorrido virtual por un pueblo ficticio en el que se van intercalando diferentes mensajes de texto animados para presentar el reto a los discentes, con el fin de despertar su motivación e implicación: "crea tu propia iniciativa empresarial", "tú determinarás su éxito o fracaso", etc. E impulsar su iniciativa hacia el diseño del proyecto.



Imagen 1. Secuencia del clip de película utilizada en la presentación del proyecto y su *misión*

- *Identificación de reglas y niveles:* en el juego se presentan las reglas a seguir y se establecen los niveles que deben superar para concluir la misión con éxito. Para conocerlos, hay que introducirse virtualmente en la escuela del pueblo, -mediante la metáfora gráfica del plano de una casa-, donde quedan visibles tres puertas, a través de las cuales se obtienen datos de interés. La primera puerta da acceso a un aula en cuya pizarra se encuentran detallados los requisitos para llevar a buen término su proyecto educativo-empresarial que deben diseñar. La segunda presenta pistas, enlaces a información relevante, y la tercera muestra la asignación de puntos que cada nivel implica, mediante una rúbrica de evaluación.

Así pues, tras acceder a cada una de las tres aulas e interactuar con los personajes que en ellas se encuentran, los estudiantes obtienen la información necesaria para poder desarrollar la misión. También se muestran “unas huellas” que metafóricamente marcan el itinerario e invitan a descubrir los pasos a dar en el diseño del proyecto, así como a promover un “juego de rol” en donde cada jugador/estudiante puede elegir su propio papel a desempeñar en el transcurso del mismo, al pulsar sobre el icono de cualquiera de los personajes que están sentados alrededor de una mesa de trabajo.



Imagen 2. Diferentes entornos dentro juego donde los estudiantes obtienen diferente información para desarrollar su proyecto

- *Asignación de puntos:* A cada uno de los niveles o etapas establecidas dentro del juego se le ha otorgado un valor diferenciado, que en función de su grado de desarrollo y de los objetivos conseguidos, el estudiante -convertido en jugador- obtiene una calificación u otra, que mediante “un termómetro” permite observar visualmente su estado si va subiendo de nivel, lo que supone una recompensa vinculada a las acciones realizadas a lo largo del juego. Dichos puntajes se presentaban *a priori* mediante una rúbrica de evaluación.

- *Presentación de desafíos:* Para favorecer la motivación de los estudiantes se generaron diversas comunidades o equipos de jugadores que competían entre sí para obtener la puntuación más alta. Con ello, se pretendía, no sólo lograr su implicación, sino también fomentar la cooperación y colaboración entre los integrantes de un mismo equipo para alcanzar un objetivo común.

De igual modo, se introdujo un desafío más, determinado por la herramienta de comunicación a utilizar para favorecer la colaboración intra-equipo en el desarrollo del proyecto. Así, se generaron tres grandes equipos que utilizaron en cada caso, *blogs*, *wikis* o redes sociales para comunicarse e intercambiar información, lo que para muchos supuso un gran desafío, bien por no estar familiarizados con la herramienta o por emplearla para un uso diferente.

- *Visibilización de la reputación de los grupos*: Al terminar el juego y tras valorar los objetivos y competencias alcanzadas con el mismo, se estableció una clasificación con las puntuaciones obtenidas por cada grupo o comunidad de aprendizaje generada en el transcurso del juego. Lo que contribuyó no sólo, a que cada estudiante fuera consciente de sus logros de aprendizaje personales sino que también le permitiera efectuar una comparación con el resto de jugadores, mostrando los puntos fuertes de cada uno.

c. Dinámicas de juego empleadas en la experiencia desarrollada

Simultáneamente, a la actividad propuesta se le dotó de una serie de dinámicas características de los juegos encaminadas a sumergir a los estudiantes en una experiencia de aprendizaje lúdica y significativa. En concreto, se parte de una simulación como motivación inicial para “engancharlos” a la tarea, subrayando la *necesidad de logro* para superar satisfactoriamente la misión solicitada como se ha explicado anteriormente. Junto con el fomento de la *competición* entre los distintos equipos creados por ellos mismos para abordar el reto que se les había encomendado, y animándoles activamente a que se comunicaran entre sí -cubriendo su necesidad de *expresión*- a través de las mencionadas herramientas, para poder elaborar colaborativamente sus propuestas de intervención educativas. De forma esquemática, en el siguiente gráfico se enuncian los componentes básicos que guiaron el proceso de gamificación de la actividad planificada:



Figura 1. Elementos que han guiado el proceso de gamificación de la experiencia llevada a cabo

d. Herramientas y recursos empleados para la gamificación

Entre los desafíos contemplados en el sistema de gamificación se incluye el requisito de utilizar una herramienta de comunicación determinada para acometer la elaboración colaborativa del proyecto de intervención en cada equipo. En este sentido, al inicio de la asignatura se distribuyó a los estudiantes (N=161), aleatoriamente, en tres grupos que introducían variantes precisamente en relación a las herramientas digitales utilizadas para favorecer la colaboración y comunicación entre los integrantes de los diferentes equipos de trabajo constituidos, inmersos en el escenario lúdico recreado. Concretamente, se formaron 15 equipos de trabajo de 4/5 personas que utilizaban los *blogs* como herramienta para la comunicación e intercambio de información; 14 equipos de trabajo de 4/5 personas que emplearon las *wikis* y otros 14 equipos de 4/5 personas que hicieron uso de las *redes sociales* con esa misma finalidad. Con ello, se pretendía constatar en qué medida las

herramientas digitales empleadas podían condicionar -a juicio de los propios estudiantes- la ejecución del proyecto, y, por ende, el desarrollo y la adquisición de determinadas competencias. Puesto que, sin duda, la elección de estas herramientas va ligada a su propia naturaleza, lo cual va a determinar tanto el tipo de interacciones que se produzcan en cada caso, como el grado de inmediatez de los mensajes que se generen a partir de ellas, así como las posibilidades que cada cual pueda ofrecer para la edición conjunta, dando lugar a diferentes entornos colaborativos.

Por otro lado, la utilización del juego como estrategia para incrementar la motivación de los estudiantes supuso una mayor implicación de éstos, promoviendo su capacidad creativa e innovadora para superar con éxito la misión propuesta. Con él, se ha podido constatar como los discentes han adquirido y desarrollado competencias de diversa índole guiados por su necesidad de logro, su espíritu competitivo y su capacidad de expresión. En un intento de conocer su grado de consciencia a ese respecto, se les preguntó sobre las competencias de carácter genérico que consideran haber adquirido y/o consolidado con el proceso de gamificación de la actividad formativa planificada.

III. Gamificación y adquisición de competencias en el contexto universitario

a. Objetivos

Desde la asignatura optativa del Grado de Pedagogía se apostó por la utilización del juego de simulación como estrategia para favorecer la implicación de los estudiantes en prácticas formativas orientadas al diseño de planes de intervención socio-educativos, atendiendo a las peculiaridades que definen la realidad concreta de un contexto rural desfavorecido (despoblamiento, envejecimiento de la población, etc.) y, con ello, garantizar que los universitarios apliquen sus conocimientos teóricos a la práctica real. Para ello, se presentó la actividad con si se tratara de un juego, que sirvió para situarlos en la misión que debían realizar si querían contribuir al desarrollo local de un pueblo -previamente identificado y seleccionado-, mostrándoles las tareas o pruebas que debían realizar para acometer con éxito su empresa. Concluida la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta, se pretende:

- Constatar el nivel de satisfacción de los estudiantes en relación al diseño del proyecto de intervención presentado a modo de juego, así como su opinión sobre la utilidad percibida y la dificultad apreciada para su desarrollo.
- Conocer la consideración de los discentes en cuanto a las competencias de carácter genérico que han percibido desarrollar y/o consolidar en el transcurso del juego de simulación.
- Efectuar un análisis comparativo sobre la contribución de las diferentes herramientas digitales (*blogs, wikis* o redes sociales) utilizadas por cada grupo de trabajo para favorecer su comunicación e interacción en el desarrollo de su proyecto, en relación a las competencias que manifestaron haber activado en mayor medida en cada caso.

- Analizar en qué medida la utilización de una determinada herramienta digital (*blogs, wikis o redes sociales*) ha podido influir en su nivel de satisfacción con el juego propuesto, así como en su percepción sobre el grado de dificultad y utilidad del mismo.

Con todo ello, se ha pretendido obtener una información valiosa para determinar la eficacia formativa de la actividad desarrollada así como de los recursos utilizados.

b. Muestra

La muestra estuvo constituida por 161 estudiantes. De los cuales el 82% eran mujeres frente a un 18% de hombres. Un análisis más detallado, en cuanto a la edad de los discentes, nos revela que la mayor parte (84%) se concreta en un intervalo de 20 y 25 años, lo que nos indica la predominancia de una población de estudio joven. No obstante, la muestra abarca edades comprendidas entre los 20 y 40 años.

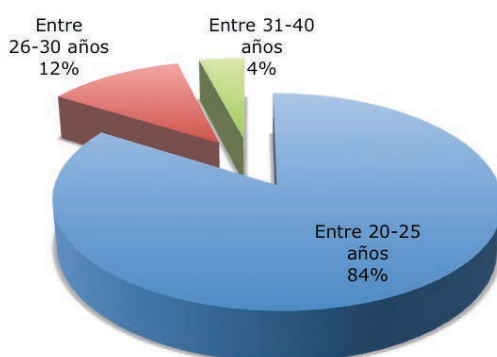


Gráfico 1. Distribución porcentual de los estudiantes que forman la muestra de estudio en función de la edad

Por otro lado, preguntados acerca de la experiencia previa que éstos tenían para realizar proyectos colaborativos con el apoyo de herramientas digitales (*blogs, wikis o redes sociales*), un 85% de los estudiantes reveló que no contaban con experiencia previa, frente a un 15% que si manifestó tenerla.

c. Instrumento

Para recabar información relativa a la percepción de los estudiantes universitarios sobre las competencias que consideraron haber desarrollado en mayor o menor medida al participar en la experiencia descrita, su opinión sobre la utilidad de la misma, etc., se elaboró un cuestionario *ad-hoc* con el que se les solicitaba diferentes datos a través de once ítems, que se sintetizan a continuación:

- Datos de identificación, referidos a la edad (ítem 1), sexo (Ítem 2) y experiencia previa en el desarrollo de actividades colaborativas apoyadas en el uso de herramientas digitales (ítem 3), donde cada herramienta: uso de *blog, wiki o redes sociales* son variables dicotómicas.
- Nivel de satisfacción con la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta, medido a través de una escala tipo Likert con tres opciones de respuesta (alta, media y baja) (ítem 4). Del mismo

modo, su opinión sobre la utilidad (alta, media y baja) del proyecto a desarrollar para tu futuro desarrollo profesional (ítem 5). Su grado de satisfacción (alto, medio y bajo) con el proceso de gamificación adoptado (ítem 6).

- Promedio de horas (nº) semanales dedicadas a la realización del mencionado proyecto lúdico formativo (ítem 7)

- Nivel de dificultad (alto, medio y bajo) percibido en relación a la realización del proyecto lúdico-formativo (ítem 8).

- Percepción sobre el nivel de adquisición de las competencias genéricas, –definidas en el marco del Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior-, que los estudiantes consideran haber adquirido y/o consolidado con el desarrollo del proyecto, presentadas como variables dicotómicas (Si/No), y categorizadas en instrumentales (ítem 9), interpersonales (ítem 10) y sistémicas (ítem 11).

d. Metodología

Paralelamente al desarrollo de la actividad lúdico-didáctica, se recabó información, entre otros aspectos, sobre la percepción manifestada por los discentes en cuanto a las competencias de carácter genérico que consideraron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con el proyecto propuesto. Para ello, los estudiantes accedían voluntariamente –poco antes de concluir la asignatura- al cuestionario *on line* habilitado al efecto para responder a las preguntas planteadas.

El tratamiento de la información obtenida se llevó a cabo atendiendo al tamaño de la muestra y la naturaleza de las variables contempladas, concretamente aplicando los estadísticos *Chi-cuadrado* (empleando un nivel de significatividad del 95%), *Kruskal-Wallis* y *Mann-Whitney*, con el fin de contrastar si las frecuencias observadas en cada una de las clases de una variable categórica varían de forma significativa respecto a las frecuencias que se esperaba encontrar si la muestra hubiese sido extraída de una población con una determinada distribución de frecuencias.

IV. Resultados

La actividad lúdica se mostraba a partir de una presentación multimedia interactiva, que recreaba un escenario similar al del videojuego *Los Sims*. Aprovechando su componente lúdico, se logró despertar el interés de los estudiantes y potenciar su motivación para que realizaran un proyecto de intervención orientado al desarrollo y a la promoción socio-cultural y educativa de un ámbito rural desfavorecido, el cual debían determinar ellos.

Tras concluir el juego propuesto, se recabó información sobre el nivel de satisfacción de los estudiantes en cuanto a la actividad lúdico-formativa realizada. Así, el 76% de los discentes registró un nivel alto de satisfacción a ese respecto. De igual modo, el 68% manifestó su alta satisfacción con la utilidad percibida en cuanto a la actividad propuesta para su futuro desarrollo profesional. En cuanto al proceso de gamificación de la práctica propuesta, algo más del 70% de los discentes declaró su alto nivel de satisfacción subrayando que lo

consideraban un elemento motivador que ha favorecido en gran medida su implicación en el proyecto.

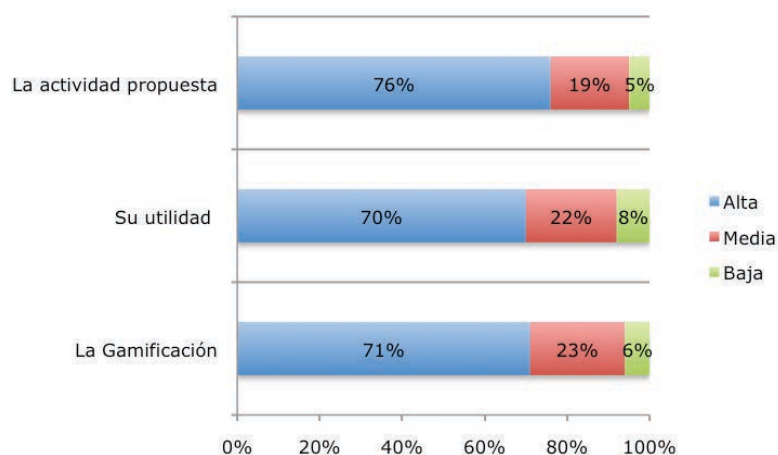


Gráfico 2. Niveles de satisfacción de los estudiantes con la actividad propuesta, su utilidad y con el proceso de gamificación planificado

Asimismo, se solicitó a los discentes que determinasen el número de horas semanales que les supuso la realización del proyecto lúdico-formativo. De este modo, el 36% de los estudiantes encuestados declaró haber dedicado un promedio de entre 3 y 4 horas semanales. Este porcentaje se mantiene, con pequeñas variaciones, en relación a las herramientas digitales utilizadas por cada grupo (*blog, wiki* o redes sociales).

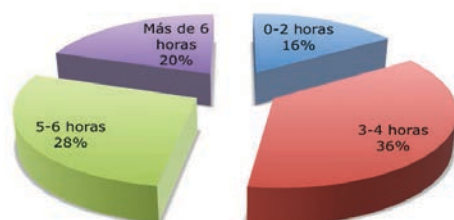


Gráfico 3. Número de horas semanales dedicadas por los estudiantes a la realización de la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta

Preguntados sobre el nivel de dificultad que les supuso el desarrollo de la actividad propuesta en forma de juego, el 64% de los estudiantes encuestados pone el acento en el alto nivel de dificultad que ha entrañado su realización. Debido, en parte, y según las declaraciones efectuadas por los discentes a través de las tutorías llevadas a cabo, a la exigencia y autodisciplina que implica el desarrollo de una actividad de carácter colaborativo, la cual implica el compromiso y el entendimiento con cada uno de los integrantes del grupo de trabajo, lo que no siempre se consigue. Datos que, en gran medida, revelan su poca experiencia en la realización de proyectos colaborativos.

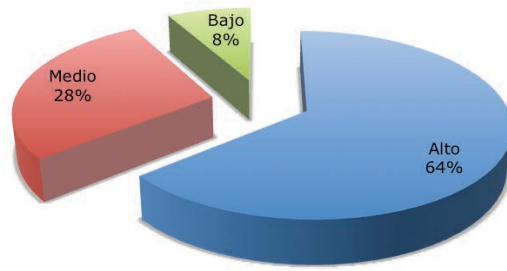


Gráfico 4. Nivel de dificultad de la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta percibido por los estudiantes

Mediante las pruebas de *Kruskal-Wallis* y *Mann-Whitney* se detectó la existencia de diferencias significativas ($P = .018$) entre los niveles de dificultad encontrada por los estudiantes al realizar la actividad en función de la herramienta digital utilizada para trabajar colaborativamente (*blogs*, *wikis* o redes sociales). Concretamente, tras el análisis de datos mediante el estadístico *Mann-Whitney* se constató que aquellos que habían utilizado las *wikis* ($P = .008$) y las redes sociales ($P = .000$) manifestaron haber encontrado mayor dificultad para llevarla a cabo, a diferencia de aquellos que habían empleado los *blogs*.

Nivel de dificultad	
7,994 2 ,018	Chi-cuadrado gl Sig.asintót.

Tabla 1. Contraste estadístico mediante la prueba *Kruskal- Wallis* entre el nivel de dificultad manifestado por los estudiantes en relación al proyecto lúdico y la herramienta digital utilizada

La dificultad añadida percibida por los estudiantes para realizar el trabajo grupal, derivada del uso de wikis o redes sociales, lo vinculan con el aumento del número de horas semanales invertidas para su elaboración, hecho que se contrastó con el estadístico *Mann-Whitney* ($P = .000$). De igual modo, la falta de experiencia previa en el desarrollo de proyectos colaborativos con apoyo de herramientas digitales fue otra de las variables que ha condicionado el aumento del número de horas semanales dedicadas a la realización del proyecto lúdico-formativo ($P = .026$) y, es que para su desarrollo, tal como se ha apuntado, era necesario crear grupos de trabajos y manejar diferentes herramientas para facilitar la interacción e intercambio de información, lo que supuso más tiempo de dedicación a aquellos estudiantes no habituados a este tipo de tareas.

Horas de dedicación semanal	
1195,500 1495,500 -2,223 ,026	U de Mann-Whitney W de Wilcoxon Z Sig.asintót. (bilateral)

Tabla 2. Contraste estadístico mediante la prueba *Mann-Whitney* entre el número de horas semanales dedicado al proyecto lúdico en relación la existencia o no de experiencia previa en el desarrollo de proyectos colaborativos con el uso de las herramientas digitales

Por otro lado, se recabó información sobre el tipo de competencias genéricas (instrumentales, interpersonales y sistémicas) que manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado los estudiantes universitarios pertenecientes a cada uno de los tres grupos creados que utilizaban diferentes herramientas digitales para la realización de la mencionada actividad lúdica.

Muestra total	Redes sociales	Wikis	Blogs	Competencias Instrumentales
61%	50%	58%	70%	Capacidad de análisis
80%	71%	81%	85%	Conocimientos básicos de la materia
50%	48%	45%	56%	Habilidades de gestión de la información
48%	67%	43%	39%	Comunicación escrita
64%	76%	74%	48%	Organización y planificación
53%	55%	47%	58%	Manejo de herramientas informáticas

Tabla 3. Competencias de carácter instrumental que los discentes manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con la actividad lúdico-didáctica

El 80% de los estudiantes declaró que con la ejecución del juego adquirieron *conocimientos básicos de la materia*, como era de esperar, ya que estaba íntimamente relacionado con los contenidos de la misma, no en vano los materiales didácticos fueron elaborados específicamente para la asignatura y se proponían a modo de guía de consulta, junto a otros recursos didácticos complementarios, tales como artículos de revistas, aportaciones de congresos y jornadas, legislación o enlaces *web*, para facilitar su realización.

Respecto a otras competencias que los discentes manifestaron haber potenciado con el juego, destacan aquellas relacionadas especialmente con la fase de *organización y planificación* (64%) y *gestión de la información* (50%), todas ellas inherentes a la ejecución de un proyecto, en este caso de carácter colaborativo. Al igual que la *capacidad de análisis*

(61%), necesaria para discriminar y valorar la información recabada a lo largo del juego, en el que se formaron grupos o comunidades de trabajo.

Entre las competencias instrumentales activadas con el juego, según los estudiantes, se encuentran la *comunicación escrita* (48%) y las habilidades ligadas al *uso de herramientas informáticas* (53%), ambas necesarias para facilitar la comunicación intra-grupos, bien a través de *blogs*, *wikis* o redes sociales como fórmulas de colaboración habilitadas en cada caso, dentro de la plataforma institucional empleada.

En relación a las competencias interpersonales que los discentes manifiestan haber desarrollado con el juego, un alto porcentaje (69%) establece que han puesto en práctica habilidades para el *trabajo en equipo*, puesto que, como ya se ha reiterado, se realizó de manera colaborativa mediante la creación de comunidades virtuales de aprendizaje, tanto a través de *blogs*, *wikis* como de redes sociales.

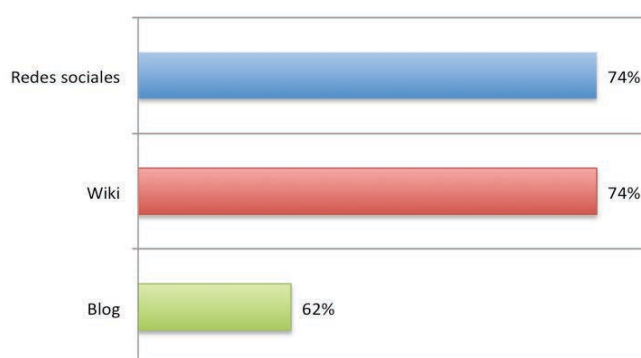


Gráfico 5. Competencias de carácter interpersonal que los discentes manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con la actividad lúdico-didáctica

De modo similar, entre las competencias sistémicas que los estudiantes declaran haber potenciado en mayor medida, se encuentran las habilidades para *diseñar y gestionar proyectos*, y su capacidad para aportar *ideas innovadoras y creativas*, con porcentajes idénticos (60%). Lógicamente, ambas son necesarias para crear una iniciativa novedosa que ofrezca garantía de éxito, que impulse el desarrollo de la población rural desfavorecida previamente determinada por ellos. En este sentido, un 46% de los mismos establece que con el proyecto -meta del juego- han incrementado su *espíritu emprendedor*.

Muestra total	Redes sociales	Wikis	Blog	Competencias Sistémicas
60%	62%	66%	55%	Aportación de ideas innovadoras y creativas
28%	26%	26%	30%	Desarrollo de habilidades para el liderazgo
60%	57%	60%	61%	Diseño y gestión de proyectos
46%	45%	53%	41%	Iniciativa y espíritu emprendedor

Tabla 4. Competencias de carácter sistémico que los discentes manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con la actividad lúdico-didáctica

Por último, preguntados por si esta actividad lúdica ha contribuido a incrementar sus habilidades para el *liderazgo*, sólo un 28% de ellos así lo cree, datos explicables puesto que

generalmente los grupos o comunidades virtuales eran liderados por una o dos personas, que eran las encargadas de dinamizar internamente los equipos, el resto no asumía ese papel.

Como se puede apreciar a partir de los datos presentados, apenas existen diferencias en cuanto a las competencias de carácter genérico que los discentes manifestaron haber adquirido y/o consolidado tras la realización del proyecto lúdico propuesto atendiendo a las diversas herramientas utilizadas (*blogs, wikis o redes sociales*) para favorecer su comunicación interna.

Sin embargo, un análisis estadístico minucioso, efectuado a través de la prueba *Chi cuadrado*, pudo determinar la existencia de diferencias estadísticamente significativas en función del grupo analizado, es decir, diferencias entre aquellos que utilizaron el *blog*, la *wiki* o las redes sociales para desarrollar el proyecto. Observando que aquellos que emplearon las *wikis* y las redes sociales manifiestan haber potenciado más su *comunicación escrita* ($p = .016$), y sus *habilidades para recoger, organizar y gestionar la información* ($p = .000$; $p = .003$). Probablemente debido a las posibilidades que ofrecen estas herramientas digitales para favorecer la interacción con el resto del equipo y la gestión de la información multiformato.

	Comunicación escrita			Habilidad recoger información			Habilidad organización y gestión de la información		
	Valor	gl	Sig. asintótica (bilateral)	Valor	gl	Sig. asintótica (bilateral)	Valor	gl	Sig. asintótica (bilateral)
Chi-cuadrado de Pearson	8,272	2	,016	21,587	2	,000	11,714	2	,003
Razón de verosimilitudes	8,372	2	,015	22,263	2	,000	11,707	2	,003
Asociación lineal por lineal	6,929	1	,008	20,133	1	,000	9,735	1	,002
N de casos válidos	161			161			161		

Tabla 5. Contraste estadístico mediante la prueba de *Chi cuadrado* entre las competencias: comunicación escrita, habilidades para recoger información y organización y gestión de la información en relación a la herramienta digital empleada para el desarrollo del proyecto lúdico-formativo

Del mismo modo, se pudo apreciar que aquellos que no contaban con experiencia previa en realización de proyectos colaborativos con apoyo de herramientas digitales, consideraron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado en mayor medida la competencia genérica relacionada con el *uso de herramientas informáticas* ($p = .010$). Este dato revela que la ayuda y refuerzos dispensados a través de la acción tutorial, encaminados a favorecer y potenciar el uso de recursos digitales para la elaboración del proyecto colaborativo en modo juego, dieron su fruto, ya que los que tenían menos experiencia previa en este tipo de tareas eran los más reticentes a la hora de implicarse activamente.

V. Conclusión

La innovación de la experiencia formativa gamificada planteada radica en su atractiva fórmula de presentación, a través de una simulación, donde se presenta la tarea a realizar como un reto a superar y donde cada miembro del grupo de trabajo, a modo de juego de rol, debe adoptar unos papeles claramente diferenciados aunque complementarios e imprescindibles para su exitosa ejecución. Su estética recuerda a la de un videojuego de simulación social que, mediante las animaciones y los diferentes elementos multimedia que incluye, pretende despertar el interés y la motivación de los discentes para la ejecución del proyecto.

Tras concluirse el proyecto, se pudo constatar el logro de los objetivos delimitados inicialmente. Así, algo más del 70% de los discentes -que formaron parte de la muestra de estudio- manifestó un nivel alto de satisfacción tanto con el tipo de actividad propuesta, como con su utilidad percibida, así como con la gamificación del proceso en tanto recurso motivador. A pesar de todo, hay que subrayar que para el 64% de los mismos la realización de la tarea entrañó un alto nivel de dificultad. En concreto, el análisis estadístico llevado a cabo permitió relacionar significativamente el incremento de la dificultad de la tarea percibido por los discentes con la utilización de las *wikis* o redes sociales para su desarrollo, dado que según manifestaron no estaban familiarizados con el uso de estas herramientas digitales con esta finalidad, lo que supuso una dificultad añadida que afectó al número de horas semanales dedicadas a la ejecución del proyecto. Sin embargo, se puede afirmar que la gamificación ha resultado una interesante y válida estrategia para potenciar la implicación de los discentes y favorecer el aprendizaje colaborativo, a tenor de las valoraciones positivas vertidas por todos ellos, independientemente de la herramienta digital utilizada por su grupo.

En cuanto a las competencias que los estudiantes consideraron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado al elaborar su proyecto, han resultado significativas las ligadas a la adquisición de conocimientos básicos de la materia, la organización y planificación de tareas, además de haber incrementado su capacidad de análisis. También señalan haber potenciado su capacidad tanto para trabajar en equipo, como para diseñar proyectos, generar ideas innovadoras y creativas.

Además, tras efectuar los análisis pertinentes, se constatan diferencias significativas entre los que habiendo utilizado las *wikis* y las redes sociales consideran haber potenciado en mayor medida las competencias ligadas a su habilidad para la comunicación escrita, la recogida, organización y gestión la información, que aquellos que utilizaron los *blogs*. Igualmente, se ha podido apreciar que los estudiantes que carecían de experiencia previa en la realización de proyectos colaborativos con apoyo de herramientas digitales, percibieron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado en mayor medida la competencia digital relacionada con el manejo de éstas, lógicamente.

Sin duda, el diseño del proyecto centrado en la plasmación de una iniciativa empresarial para impulsar el desarrollo de un contexto rural desfavorecido, -elaborado en el marco del escenario gamificado creado-, ha ofrecido una oportunidad a los estudiantes para:

- Facilitar su aprendizaje, al permitirles aplicar los contenidos teóricos aprendidos en la asignatura.

- Centrarse en el logro de determinados objetivos propios de la materia, así como en el desarrollo de las competencias específicas al simular la puesta en práctica de su propuesta.
- Reproducir una experiencia exitosa, contextualizándola y adaptándola a las demandas del entorno social y al colectivo al que se dirigen en cada caso.
- Planificar un plan de actuación educativo atendiendo al logro de los objetivos propuestos, ajustándose a los recursos humanos y económicos con los que se cuenta.
- Autoevaluarse de forma realista, tras conocer los criterios que sirven para valorar sus ejecuciones, tanto personales como colectivas.
- Minimizar la brecha entre la teoría académica y la práctica laboral.

Para concluir, hay que subrayar que la conversión de una actividad formativa académica en una experiencia lúdica atrayente y retadora no solo ha potenciado la motivación e implicación de los estudiantes para acometer la "misión" presentada de forma efectiva, sino que ha contribuido al incremento de numerosas competencias. Si bien ha exigido al docente activar su imaginación y creatividad para diseñar escenarios de aprendizaje atractivos, adoptando las mecánicas propias de los juegos para dinamizar el proceso de aprendizaje, combinando novedosas estrategias didácticas y utilizando herramientas digitales para flexibilizar la interacción y la comunicación, así como para promover la competitividad, a partir de la propuesta de atractivas actividades basadas en la resolución de tareas y en la realización de proyectos de forma innovadora y colaborativa, capaces de fomentar el desarrollo de numerosas competencias.

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Using Gamification to Enhance Second Language Learning

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Abstract

One major competence for learners in the 21st century is acquiring a second language (L2). Based on this, L2 instruction has integrated new concepts to motivate learners in their pursue of achieving fluency. A concept that is adaptable to digital natives and digital immigrants that are learning a L2 is Gamification. As a pedagogical strategy, Gamification is basically new, but it has been used successfully in the business world. Gamification not only uses game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts (Werbach & Hunter, 2012), but also empowers and engages the learner with motivational skills towards a learning approach and sustaining a relax atmosphere. This personality factor as Brown (1994) addresses is fundamental in the teaching and learning of L2. This article covers aspects regarding language, second language learning methodology and approaches, an overview of the integration of technology towards L2 instruction, Gamification as a concept, motivational theory, educational implications for integrating the strategy effectively, and current applications used. It also calls for a necessity of empirical evidence and research in regards to the strategy.

Keywords

Gamification, Second Language Learning, Motivational Theory, Student Engagement

I. Introduction

The use of Gamification in educational settings toward L2 learning involves pedagogical approaches, methodologies, and strategies. All of these are part of the transition made by language learning instruction throughout generations. Several motivational strategies and approaches used in traditional pedagogy are also part of this transition. Including Behaviorism, Cognitivist approaches, along with social interaction and sociocultural theories.

As the 21st century moves forward, the field of second language learning and instruction has become more technology oriented. This adjustment in the teaching strategies is in accordance with the learners the educators are receiving in their classroom. Plenty of second language (L2) learners are part of a generation that Prensky (2001) describe as "Digital Natives". These learners process the information different and the educational system does not fit their needs. In addition more learners are aware of the benefits of the Internet and the strength of Connectivism as explained by Seimens (2005), where knowledge resides outside nodes of specialized information. At one point Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was instrumental connecting with the L2 learner, also the integration of Web 2.0 move the L2 learning process away from the typical classroom setting. Both technology oriented strategies fit their purposes and where successful. But none of these two strategies worked directly with the psychological aspect of motivation. Brown (1994) sees motivation as a necessary personality factor that the learner needs in order to acquire a L2.

Current L2 educators are well aware of the strategies suited for this time and that enhances motivation and engages learners in acquiring L2. From all the strategies that exist, Gamification is one that constantly promotes motivation. According to Werbach and Hunter (2012), is the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts In addition it deals with the two clusters of Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation, which are necessary in the L2 learning experience. It also adapts to motivational work conducted in the field of L2 by Gardner and Lambert (1972), which mentions Instrumental and Integrative motivation, and Graham (1984) distinction of Assimilative motivation. In addition, research has found Educational Gamification in L2 learning is basically new but it success in other disciplines made it adaptable to the objectives towards the development second language acquisition (SLA) in learners.

II. Understanding Language and Second Language

Before moving forward to the use of Gamification and how it enhances L2 learning its necessary to understand the concept of language. This is sometimes a dilemma. Most of the time thanks in part to the abroad definitions of the concept. According to Brown (1994), the word language has many definitions in dictionaries and introductory textbooks. For that reason a L2 educator needs to see it as a composite definition. This type of definition will help the educator adapt it towards the L2 learner or even instructional mode. Brown (1994) presents it as a list:

1. Language is systematic and generative.
2. Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.
3. Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may also be visual.
4. The symbols have conventionalized meaning to which they refer.
5. Language is used for communication.

6. Language operates in a speech community or culture.
7. Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.
8. Language is acquired by all people in much the same way-language and language learning both has universal characteristics.

The teaching and learning process is necessary to be understood as a base for L2 learning and interaction. Based on Gage (1964), teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. At the same time teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting the conditions for learning. If the educator understands the learner's process of acquiring knowledge, he or she will be able to develop a philosophy, a style, an approach, methods, and classroom techniques. According to Bruner (1966), in Brown (1994), listed that a theory of instruction needs to specify the following:

1. The experiences which most effectively implant in the individual a predisposition toward learning.
2. The ways in which a body of knowledge should be structured so that the learner can most readily grasp it.
3. The most effective sequences in which to present the materials to be learned.
4. The nature and pacing of rewards and punishments in the process of learning and teaching and learning.

According to Kimble and Garmenzy (1963) and seen in Brown (1994), learning is a relatively permanent change in a behavioral tendency and is the result of reinforced practice. Based on this definition a list of learning domains for research and practice are presented:

1. Learning is acquisition or "getting".
2. Learning is retention of information or skill.
3. Retention implies storage systems, memory, and cognitive organization.
4. Learning involves active, conscious focus on and acting upon events outside or inside the organism.
5. Learning is relatively permanent but subject to forgetting.
6. Learning involves some form of practice, perhaps, reinforced practice.
7. Learning is a change in behavior.

a. Differences in first language learning and second language learning

It's impossible to continue without explaining basic concepts and definitions of SLA, differences between first language learning (L1) and L2, and presenting an overview of theories, methods, and instructional techniques used throughout the years. Such like the definition of language, there are many definitions on SLA and learning that tend to confuse. But perhaps what researchers have called the most important conceptualization in the field (Taylor, 1983) and supported by Brown (1994), is the distinction made by Stephen Krashen between language acquisition and language learning in his theory of SLA. According to Krashen (1982), acquisition is a subconscious process while learning is conscious. But instead of a philosophical approach towards the term, a definition by Gass and Selinker (2001) that establishes that SLA is the learning of a non-native language after learning of a native language has begun and occurring in the context in which the language is spoken. SLA and learning differs from Foreign Language Learning (FLL), because the environment is of one's native language.

According to Hart and Risley (1995), differences between L1 and L2 arises because L1 occurs naturally and perhaps without any formal instruction by children being constantly exposed to language rich environments over the course of many years. On the other hand L2 most of the time depends heavily on learning experiences in more constricted environments associated with the classroom or some other formal setting. In these settings, a major goal frequently is to formally teach children the elements of language that are learned much more informally in their native language. Consequently, assumptions regarding teaching and learning second languages are very different from assumptions about children learning their native language. But according to Malone (2012), a strong foundation in your mother tongue constitutes a strong "bridge" toward L2. In addition she expresses that without that characteristic any movement towards L2 could be in jeopardy or in danger of not achieving educational goals.

b. Theories in second language acquisition and learning

There have been several representative theories for SLA throughout the years. This includes: Behaviorism, Language Acquisition Device (LAD), Information Processing, Social Interaction and Sociocultural Theories. An overview of these theories is explained in the table below, which is adapted from Malone (2012):

Behaviorism	Typified by B.F. Skinner and impacted almost all areas of investigation. Human behavior could be learned through stimulus, response, and positive or negative reinforcement or S-R-R.
Language Acquisition Device (LAD)	Theorized by Noam Chomsky and breaks with S-R-R. "Argues that the stages of development that are required for children to develop their cognitive abilities do not apply to language learning. This new approach focused almost entirely in the deep structure of individuals' native language".
Information Processing	The Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT) was developed by Anderson (1983). "Intelligence is simply the gathering together and fine tuning of many small units of knowledge that in total produce complex thinking".
Social Interaction and Sociocultural theories	Theorized by Vygotsky and emphasizes in the role of social environment on children's learning. Swain (1985), argues that comprehensible output in meaningful conversations is necessary for success in SLA. Gass (2002), focus on the language learning context and how learners use their linguistic environment."

Table 1. Theories in SLA and Learning

c. Methods for second language instruction

In addition several methods for L2 instruction have been used throughout the years. It all started with the Grammar Translation Method back in the 19th century. According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979), the method for learning included teaching in the mother tongue with little active use of the target language, vocabulary lists, long and elaborate grammar explanations, little attention to content of text, no attention to pronunciation, everything

explained using the mother tongue, and plenty of memorization. Then, linguists in America developed the Audiolingual Approach in the early 20th century. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979), explain that this method follow an structural pattern with repetitive drills, plenty of tapes, language labs and visual aids, very little tongue by teachers is permitted, there is a great effort by learner to produce error free utterances, and grammar is taught following inductive analogy rather than deductive explanations. Another method used for SLA and learning is the Natural Approach developed by Krashen (1982) and based on his SLA Monitor Model, which included ideas, developed by Chomsky. Some of the characteristics of the Natural Approach includes a basic form or natural order of L2 learning and instruction, presents a difference between SLA and L2 learning, an affective filter plays a critical role and the approach has a silent period or phase. Moving forward, the appearance of the Communicative Approach integrated learners to real life situations in order to prepare them for the real world. Later, this became more a way of teaching than a method as explained by Brown (1994). It created a theoretical framework design around a set of classroom principles better know as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). These principles are listed by Malone (2012), and include:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
4. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Other approaches later appeared based on the CLT perspective. These included Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content Based Instruction (CBI).

d. Teaching strategies in second language acquisition and learning

In order to be successful in SLA and L2 learning the selection of teaching strategies needs to be accurate. According to Brown (1994), these strategies will create the relaxed atmosphere necessary to comfort the L2 learner. Some of the strategies are briefly mentioned and explained in the table below.

Total Physical Response	Promotes interactivity and is based on the silent period explained by Krashen (1982). Speaking is not necessary because comprehensible input is given. The instructor needs to provide a variety not to bore the students.
Cooperative Learning	This strategy follows the use of groups and pairs in order to achieve positive interaction. Plenty of strategies are presented through the peers.
Dialogue Journals	Promote written conversations between the teacher and learner. Reflexive journals are promoted. Good for assessing writing in a different and relax format.
Scaffolding	The advanced learners help their peers achieve success. It’s part of Krashen (1982) comprehension input. Fluency is built thru positive reinforcement. This type of activity is not suited for virtual settings.

Table 2. Second Language Acquisition and Learning Strategies

III. Overview of Emergent Technologies in Second Language Learning

There is a strong bond between Gamification and emergent technologies. It all starts with its definition which can be synthesized as the application of game mechanics in non-game related contexts (Deterding, Sicart, Nacke, and Nixon, 2011). The main objective of Gamification is to increase participation and motivate users through the use of game elements such as points, leaderboards, and immediate feedback among other things. This is similar to the strategy of using technologies in L2 learning. The use of technology in L2 learning and instruction has played an essential part throughout the years. This is in part based in Prensky's (2001), definition of the Digital Natives. In addition, the work of Ybarra and Green (2003), mentions that the use of technology plays an integral part in providing L2 learners a valuable language experience as they learn a second language. Most of all it contributes to the positive development of some personality factors like self-esteem, risk-taking and most of all motivation. Developing motivation in the L2 learner by using technology provides a common denominator between Gamification and L2 learning which results in enhancing this experience. In L2 learning, integrating technology has become essential and the integration of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been instrumental for the development of teaching and learning. This is based on CALL established presence in academia and because it focuses on technology (Hubbard & Levy, 2006). According to Levy (1997), CALL is defined as the application of the computer in language teaching and learning. It is the evolution of Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL). The use of CALL in L2 these days has moved away from the Behavioristic CALL, which was a sub-component of CAI, of the 1950's and 60's. Behavioristic CALL focused on repetitive and extensive language drills and grammatical explanations along with translation tests. It is well remembered in part by Plato, which was the tutorial of the time and ran on special software that needed a central computer and terminals. This was not user friendly and boring for the L2 learner. Then, the evolution continued to Communicative CALL, which followed cognitive theories during the 1970's and 1980's. Cognitive theorists focused on learning as a process of discovery, expression, and development. The type of strategy implemented focused on computer-based activities instead of using forms themselves. By the emergence of the PC other possibilities that included the use of target language predominantly or exclusively, grammar was taught explicitly rather than implicitly. The use of text reconstruction programs and stimulations provided the L2 learners with the experience of working alone or in pairs. Finally, Integrative CALL appeared during the 1990's based on a socio-cognitive view and a focus on the use of language in authentic social contexts. This opened the door for a more diverse student centered use of technology in L2. An integration during the teaching and learning started working with task based projects, project based approaches, and content based approaches. Integrative CALL implemented an approach toward L2 learners by which listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills were used in combination with the learning of technology tools as an ongoing process for language learning. This type of CALL opened the door for the use of the Web 2.0 and social media as a strategy towards L2 learning. Nowadays, thanks to CALL, the L2 learner has become an active participant and language explorer. Also the students recognize that to do several tasks they need to use various tools that will help them learn L2 easily and effectively (Ybarra & Green, 2003). On the other hand educators had understood that they are not the only source for language information and the need for training in emergent technologies is necessary in order to use multimedia appropriately and accurately.

The use of the Web 2.0 changed the educational world and the L2 teaching and learning was not the exception. According to O'Reilly (2005), the Web 2.0 are web applications that facilitates interactive information for sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. They are the evolution of traditional technologies into web applications focusing on the user. This end user vision helped the teaching and learning process dramatically in L2 basically in part for giving the opportunity to the learning of interacting in social networking and web based communities, along with expressing their opinions in blogs, doing collaborative work with wikis, and developing oral language skills with podcasts. The strategy of using the Web 2.0 in L2 learning provided motivation for students who at a certain a period needed to empower their personality and sociocultural aspects in order to acquire fluency.

IV. What is Gamification?

The concept of Gamification is basically new, and according to Werbach and Hunter (2012), is the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts. It is based in the success of the gaming industry, social media, and decades of research in human psychology. Basically, any task, assignment, process or theoretical context can be gamified. The main objectives focuses on increasing the participation of a person, which most of the time is called or mentioned as an "user", and motivate him/her by incorporating game elements and techniques, like leaderboards and immediate feedback. This creates in the users a sense of empowerment and engagement in the way they work thru processes and achieve tasks. In addition, understanding the basic concepts of the games becomes essential at the time of delineating and using Gamification as strategy. But even before thinking about the motivational aspects that this concept provides, is necessary to re-visit the four components of the definition which are: games, elements, design and non-game contexts.

These components are explained in the work of Sailer, Hense, Mandl, and Klevers (2013) as follows:

"The term game is usually understood to imply the following situational components: a goal, which has to be achieved; limiting rules which determine how to reach the goal; a feedback system which provides information about progress towards the goal; and the fact that participation is voluntary". The term element helps to distinguish the concept of gamification from serious games, which describe full-fledged games for non-entertainment purposes. Gamification on the other hand refers to the explicit use of particular elements of games in non-gaming contexts. The term design refers to the use of game design instead of game-based technologies or practices of the wider game ecology. As stated before, the area of application of gamification is very broad. To take account of that and to prevent limiting the definition to certain contexts, the area of application is just described by the term non-game-contexts."

Those components are essential to be understood individually, and are explained in an abroad form. On the other hand the concept of Gamification takes an additional perspective when the components, perceived as key elements, become instrumental in the development of the concept and application of the concept. For example the concept will involve the

concepts of game elements, game design, and non-game context. Also, Gamification is diverse and has different uses.

a. Game elements

The regular design of patterns that design the games are known as game elements. Some of these elements, sometimes described as components, are seen in most of the games nowadays, including: points, badges, leaderboards, progress bars/progression charts, performance graphs, quests, levels, avatars, social elements, and rewards. All these elements have different purposes and can be adapted to basically any work, business or education related environment. A brief definition of each element is provided in the table below:

Points	Numeric accumulation based on certain activities.
Badges	Visual representation of achievements for the use shown online.
Leaderboards	How the players are ranked based on success.
Progress bars/Progression	Shows the status of a player.
Performance graph	Shows player performance.
Quests	Some of the tasks players have to fulfill in a game.
Levels	A section or part of the game
Avatars	Visual representation of a player or alter ego.
Social elements	Relationships with other user through the game.
Rewards/reward system	System to motivate players that accomplish a quest.

Table 3. Game elements and definitions

Each game element used in Gamification enhances automatically the teaching and learning process of L2. Most of the games the public knows have these elements nowadays, but all of them follow a systematic plan. Every game integrates three basic elements: meta-centered activities, rewards, and progression (Dickey, 2005). This follows what is expressed by Smith-Robbins (2011), who mentions that all game activities are meta-centered and have activities of this kind because they are oriented towards a specific objective which ultimately focuses on winning by defeating obstacles and other conditions, in order to achieve or complete a quest. In addition, and depending on the context, each game employs a mechanism for the player to receive rewards or reward system. There are three principal categories, which include: leaders, prizes or awards, and achievements.

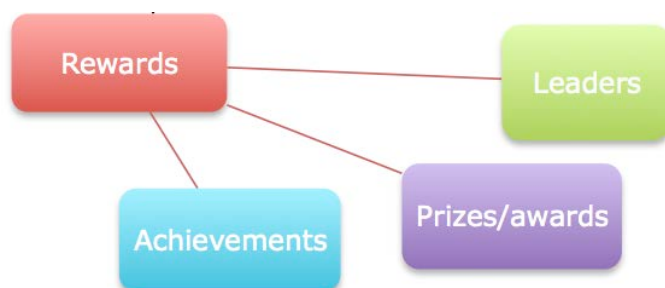


Image 1. Principal categories of game elements

The leaders are the users classified based on their game success. The same concept is used in sports and most of the time incorporates a leaderboard, which could serve as a strong motivator. This category is typically used in competitive activities, but is often employed by the business world to motivate teamwork. Another reward system includes prizes or awards. This type of reward occurs in games where the player is able to unblock additional activities or levels after successfully accomplishing the previous ones. Prizes/awards promote an additional commitment and engagement by the player (Glover, Campbell, Latig, Norris, Toner & Tse, 2012) and that is one aspect which is persisted in L2 learning. Finally, achievements are publicly shown icons, or the so-called badges, in the player's online profile. They are perceived as the integration or combination of the previously mentioned reward categories. The integration and use of badges, each with a different meaning, has grown tremendously in part to the development of game consoles and online gaming. For the L2 learner motivation arrives in the way of acceptance or blending in. If they receive the recognition they will be motivated to move to another level or reach an additional reward. The final basic element implemented in games is progression. According to Dickey (2005), progression is a very important element for games. Most of all for the level of engagement and motivation it gives to the player. Its main objective is to maintain the player informed on how much progress he or she has in the level. In addition it gives the player the necessary information about the goals that were completed and the necessary tasks to complete the level. It also represents the player's journey, which could be part of a series of small challenges embedded into a larger challenge (Werbach and Hunter (2012). In the L2 classroom the educator implements progression by systematically promoting healthy competition and showing the progress to the class. The L2 learner is able then to see his or her progress and becomes a risk taker while he is motivated to move on or continue.

b. Game design and non-game contexts

Another component in the definition of Gamification mentioned by Werbach and Hunter (2012) is game design. Basically, games are not only elements; games are designed systemically and artistically for the purpose of fun but they need to be creative and focused. They need to provide originality and not merely be clones of others. Also, originality and character is necessary to provide depth and richness to the player's experience. Good game design is balanced and leaves the player with a feeling on how was the game experience overall. For example: Was it challenging? Was it hard? Was it easy? In addition, game design has an experiential aspect that involves the integration of current and novel approaches based on exploration and discovery that could be applied to Gamification and motivate the player.

Werbach and Hunter (2012) mentioned that Gamification is developed following a non-game context vision. What this means is that the target objectives won't be focused solely in having fun or enjoyment, both will be part of the experience. The vision of non-game contexts has been essential in the development and training of employees by many companies around the world. Pappas (2013) mentions that the use of game like strategies make training for the work environment more interesting, gratifying, and applicable than other techniques.

c. Current uses of Gamification

As the article indicates, the concept of Gamification is not new. Plenty of uses have been given before that fit the criteria. But, nowadays with the proliferous use of social media and the accessibility to the Internet, the concept is being applied to plenty of diverse uses. Some uses include: employee motivation, conceptualization of the concept of energy preservation, to beat and understand diseases, create healthy competition, to promote charitable donations, promote customer loyalty, education, language learning, among others. There are several Gamification projects that are currently been used and that move away from the typical check-ins to earn points or badges encouraged by the Foursquare app. The following are three examples that present the concept of Gamification with diverse purposes. In addition, Gamification is currently implemented with educational purposes as a strategy to foster student engagement in different content areas including L2 learning.

U.S. Army-America's Army

For many years the U.S. Army has been using games for training purposes. But, nowadays they are using Gamification, by integrating a gamifying experience called America's Army, with the final mission of recruiting people for their branch of the United States armed forces.

Samsung Nation

Everyone identifies Samsung, the South Korean company with state of the art phones, tv's, tablets among other things. But there is a strong market demand and competition in this industry. They created a gamified social loyalty and customer engagement program called Samsung Nation where they use elements such like badges, and progress through levels of achievement. Samsung created this social project in order to establish a branded content for the company. Thru Samsung Nation users get engage within the community in reviewing products, watching videos, and other activities.

Chore Wars

One of the aspects of Gamification it that in order to promote motivation it promotes competition. But is not a competition that will finish in discord, is healthy competition to engage people in achieving an objective. This type of competition is presented thru ChoreWars, which is often used for employee motivation.

V. Gamification in Education and Second Language Learning

The use of technology in education has become necessary to fortify the teaching and learning experience in the 21st century. Throughout the years we've seen dramatic changes and experienced transitions that had move forward computer hardware and software, along with web-based technologies towards instruction. Most of all, we've experienced dramatic changes in the educational interests and the ways to teach different generations. Nowadays, most of the students are digital natives, and they learn and process information different (Prensky, 2001). The also called millennial generation shares information and is used to blogging, gaming and social networking. Instead of emails they prefer to text and have created a language based on acronyms. They are focused toward everything that is web based and are not afraid of expressing or assuming an individual or shared vision. Based on

this type of learner plenty of instructors from different subjects, including L2 teachers, are implementing several teaching strategies that use plenty of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's), Distributed Learning, Mobile Learning resources and Gamed Based Learning. In addition, these educators are aware of new trends in educational technology and are integrating Gamification to their teaching. According to the NMC-Horizon Report (2014), Gamification is building support in teachers and the time of adoption is around two to three years. The report established clearly that:

“the Gamification of education is gaining support among educators who recognize that effectively designed games can stimulate large gains in productivity and creativity among learners”.

In addition, Gamification has become a tendency in online learning and in professional development for educators. The report presents the example of Kaplan University, who embedded Gamification software to their LMS and web applications; they ran a pilot program in one of their information technology courses with plenty of success as the NMC-Horizon Report (2014), mentions the following:

“Students’ grades improved 9% and the number of students who failed the course decreased by 16%.”

In regards to professional development for educators the report presents the case of the Deloitte executive firm. They developed the Deloitte Leadership Academy and implemented educational Gamification. Some of the game elements they instituted were the use of badges for those who completed the curriculum-based missions. As part of the reward mechanism, learners were able to share their badges in their LinkedIn profile for worldwide view through the Internet.

Gamification has been the subject of research, discussion, and application in L2 learning and SLA a few years now. The objective for integrating Gamification towards education is to unchain a more attractive and effective learning experience for the student. Following this aspect the L2 learner feels attracted towards having this experience. This is based on the idea the L2 education has been immersed in technology innovation for many years. In order to change or set off a specific behavior, the learners need to be motivated and Gamification opens the door for the L2 learner to enhance its language learning experience and at the same time acquire the skill to solve any task or challenge the class, the unit, or the topic presents. In addition, Gamification offers the learners an opportunity to interact among them as it's implied in a social game. Following this criteria Gamification and several of the most common approaches and techniques in L2 teaching and are being integrated. Another detail is that when people perceive any form of social presence they tend to respond in a natural way to feelings such as happiness, empathy, and frustration, or even follow social rules like taking turns (Fogg, 2002).

A very important aspect in Gamification with educational purposes is based on the implication that envisions educational objectives. These educational objectives will be seen by the learner as challenges to be accomplished in order to move from one stage to the other. At the end the challenge and moving from one stage to the other becomes part of the learning outcome. This provides alternatives for L2 educators in order to plan effectively toward the language learning experience and fluency levels they are working with and

rethink their practices based on the similarities they find in games and learning. For example by implementing Gamification the L2 learner could think of him or her as a player looking forward to complete a level. If this is translated to the psycho-pedagogical aspect, and following Ames (1990) and Pintrich (2003) the learner will be moving forward after successfully completing a unit, module, or task and the language learning is assessed thru a variety of game like experiences. Moving Educational Gamification into the L2 learning process let's the instructor plan instruction using a gamified shared vision, along with an increase in the time dedicated to the learning tasks and in the level of difficulty, in this case fluency towards the language approach. By following this learners become more engaged and motivated. In addition, motivation increases in a gamified instructional environment when the learner performance is publicly recognized thru a reward system of prizes/awards. In the case of Gamification in L2 and when badges are implemented, Buckingham (2014), acknowledges that it's use serves as a motivational tool and could become a form of formative assessment along with developing a higher classroom setting standards for the challenges that the learner presents while in the quest of achieving fluency in L2. An analog example of a reward system was when the teacher publicly recognizing a student by giving him/her a golden star. According to Glover, Campbell, Latig, Norris, Toner and Tse (2012), the use of badges or another reward-gamified system should motivate the students in more competitive tasks, for example creating a research paper, and should never substitute to be exempt of a test. If this occurs the real learning process could be affected (Meece, Anderman, Anderman 2006).

a. Educational gamification five step model

In order to apply Gamification, regardless of the course, to the teaching and learning process a series of steps needs to be followed. These will guide the instructor to plan accordingly the Gamification aspect. In order to gamify instruction, the educators follow a five-step model. This model is presented in an image below from the work of Huang and Soman (2013).



Image 2. Educational Gamification Five Step Model (Adapted from Huan and Soman (2013)

In order to deal with step one, Understanding the Target Audience and the Context, the instructor needs to know who his or her students are. A combination of the target audience is necessary along with analysing the context to understand several key factors like group size, environment, skills sequence, and length. Is in this step that the "pain points" appear. Those pain points are several factors that prevent the learner advancement of the program. There are some common pain points in education: focus, motivation, skills, pride, learning environment and nature of the course, and physical, mental and emotional factors. By understanding these points the educator will be ready to determine the Gamification elements to implement.

Defining the Learning Objectives, step two, is always necessary for a successful teaching and learning experience. These objectives need to have general instructional goals, specific learning goals, and behavioral goals. In order to have a successful learning experience thru Gamification the instructor needs to have the ability of combining and implementing the learning objectives.

Step three on the five-step model, Structuring the Experience, looks to break down the program and identify the main points. In these stage the instructor prepares the sequence and quantify what the student needs to learn and achieve by the end of each stage. If students are staying behind, the instructor needs to re-think and provide a push for motivation in order for the student to complete the stage. The educator needs to move his educational program from simple to complex by starting with easier milestones so that the student stays engaged and motivated.

As seen in the image above, Identifying Resources is step four of this model. At the moment the stages have been identified, the teacher will have complete assurance of which stage can or can't be gamified. The instructor needs to reflect in regards to several aspects that need to be considered. These are: tracking mechanisms, currency, levels, rules, and feedback. The image below presents these aspects along with definitions.

Tracking Mechanism	A tool to measure the student's progress in the learning program/stage.
Currency	The unit of measure, which could be points, time, money, etc. E.g. If assignments are to be completed by a certain deadline, the tracking mechanism's currency is time.
Level	A specific amount of a currency used to accomplish an objective. E.g. Once the student has completed the assignment s/he has completed the task for that level and can move to the next level.
Rules	Boundaries for what a student can or cannot do in their learning program, to ensure it is a fair learning environment for everyone. E.g. The rule for completing the first level is not only to finish it by the deadline but also, to answer all the questions correctly.
Feedback	A mechanism the instructor and/or student can use to learn about the progress being made. E.g. Students learn better from tests than studying, because they can see what they did wrong and fix gaps in their understanding.

Image 3. Step 4 definitions





The last step of Huang and Soman (2013) model is Applying Gamification Elements. In this step the educator decides which Gamification elements should be applied. The elements are divided in self and social. Self-elements most of the time uses badges, levels and time restrictions. They focus on making students compete with themselves and recognize self-achievement. Meanwhile, interactive competitions along with cooperation are seen as social-elements. Is with this type of element that students' achievements are made public and the students become part of a community.

By following the previous steps, educators will have the opportunity for strategic planning in what could become a heaven of educational creativity towards the teaching and learning process. There are plenty of activities that educators could implement thru Educational

Gamification. These activities could be transferred toward L2 instruction. Some might include the use of online educational games, best guess, rewards system, badges, use of Nintendo WII or Xbox and the Internet for plenty of educational digital game based activities, and combining social platforms and social education platforms where badges and progression could be located and seen. All of the previous are focus on engaging the learner in healthy competition. Nowadays, one key essential need for the learners is to be motivated and that is the core that moves Gamification. Through the use of game elements like avatars, badges, leaderboards, progress charts, among other, learners will receive an extra input, similar to the one they have in console games that will motivate them to achieve another educational task or even learn a second language.

b. Differences between Gamification, game-based learning, simulations and serious games

At this stage is necessary to present the differences between the concepts of Gamification, Game Based Learning, Simulations, and Serious Games. As is has been previously establish the concept of Gamification is the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). This is used as part of stimuli in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand Caponeto, Earp and Ott (2014), presents Game Based Learning as the adoption of games for educational purposes. Meanwhile, Kapp (2012) comments that Simulation is a self-contained type of environment where interaction is essential for the learner to practice skills and knowledge. In addition, he mentions that Serious Games are a certain type of game that was design with pure entertainment not as it's primary purpose. The following table demonstrates the four concepts and offers examples, illustrations along with a brief description of each.

<p>Gamification (Educational): Class Dojo Is an Educational Gamification tool designed to keep students on track and manages student behavior. Several game elements are used like avatars and progress. It gives the opportunity for real time feedback. Can be accessed online or downloaded as an app.</p>	
<p>Game-Based Learning (Digital): Ten Frame Game This is an online educational game suited for younger learners. The objective is to have fun while learners understand the concept of place value.</p>	
<p>Simulations (Educational): Sid Meier's Colonization It is a simulation that works for computers with Windows and MacOS. The objective of the game is for the user to create a new country while acquiring plenty of social studies and history knowledge along with vocabulary development.</p>	
<p>Serious Games: 3rd World Farmer It's a browser simulation online game that lets the advanced learners experience some of the hardships of farming in a poor country. It's a great alternative for developing character and decision-making. In addition it creates in the learner a sense of self-awareness.</p>	

VI. Motivational Implications between Gamification and Second Language Learning

Personality factors influence dramatically the L2 learning process. Brown (1994) presents several of these and suggests that they contribute positive in successfully learning L2. These factors include: The Affective Domain, Self-Esteem, Inhibition, Risk-Taking, Anxiety, Empathy, Extroversion, Myers-Briggs Character Types, and Motivation. The common denominator between L2 learning or SLA and Gamification is Motivation. According to Shcunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2010), motivation is the psychological process responsible for initiating and continuing goal directed behaviors. It is frequently demonstrated by an individual choice to engage in an activity and the intensity of effort or persistence in the activity (Garris, Ahlers, and Driskell, 2002). There are two types of motivation that are essential in L2 learning and are considered personality factors. These are Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation. But before explaining these two clusters is necessary to understand three motivational concepts that were part of significant studies in L2 learning that will contribute to enhance the motivational aspects and work with Gamification. These are: Instrumental, Integrative, and Assimilative motivation. The studies conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and demonstrated by Brown (1994), presented Instrumental and Integrative motivation.

“ Instrumental motivation refers to motivation to acquire a language as means for attaining instrumental goals: furthering a career, reading technical material, translation, and so forth. On the other hand Integrative motivation is employed when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of L2 group to identify themselves with and become part of society”.

Another scholar who established a definition towards motivation and L2 learning was Graham (1984). He was able to define Assimilative motivation as:

“ The drive to become an indistinguishable member if the speech community, an it usually requires prolonged contact with the second language culture. Assimilative motivation is characteristic of people who, persons at a very young age, learn a second language and second culture”.

Turning back to Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation, Lepper (1988) explained that when people are intrinsically motivated they tend to take an activity for their own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feeling of accomplishments it evokes. On the other hand when people become extrinsically motivated is to obtain some reward or avoid punishment. According to Muntean (2011), Gamification combines these two types of motivation. In addition the game elements will adjust greatly for the L2 learner. For example by using extrinsic rewards like levels, points, and badges to improve engagement while intrinsically motivating towards the achievement, mastery, autonomy, and sense of belonging. In addition competition, social interaction, and cooperation the second language learner becomes motivated.

a. Perspectives in motivational researche

There are six principal perspectives in motivational research that has been linked to Gamification and can be applied to L2 learning: Trait, Behavioristic Learning, Cognitive, Self-determination, Interest, and Emotion explained in the work of Sailer, Hense, Mandl and Kelvers, (2013). Each perspective has its own characteristics that enhance motivation for the L2 learner. For example, the Trait perspective observes motives as individual characteristics and some of the important one that it presents include achievement, need for power, and affiliation (McClelland, 1961; 2009). Many times the L2 learner fills out of place or receive a culture shock and thru the integration of this perspective he or she could survive that socio cultural factor that prevent the learning to happen. On the other hand, Behavioristic Learning is seen as a result of previous experiences, including past positive or negative reinforcement, or stimulus-response bonds (Skinner, 1963). An application of these toward enhancing L2 and Gamification will be to use reflexive journals or sharing experiences thru the creation of an avatar. The Cognitive perspective perceives motivation as a means-ends analysis where is dependent of situation-specific goals, and expectancies regarding the outcome of the situation itself, expectancies of the consequences of the outcome, and the subjective value (Heckhausen, 1977; Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2008). Also the influence on the variables could differentiate a performance intrinsic motivation (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2010). The perspective of Self-determination postulates the psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and social relatedness. The fulfilments of these needs are necessary in intrinsic motivation and can be extrinsically perceived by the fulfilment of the needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the other hand, Interest is seen by researchers as an affective and cognitive variable and evolves in content specific and interaction with the environment (Hidi, Renninger, Krapp , 2004). Finally, Emotion can be influenced by instructional strategies as it outlined by researchers as an emotional design of instruction, which works with motivational mechanisms (Astleitner, 2004). All of the previous perspectives have implications for practice in L2 learning thru Gamification. The table below shows some of these implications based on their perspective and adapted from the work of Sailer, Hense, Mandl and Kelvers, (2013).

Perspective	Implications
Trait	"Players with a strong achievement motive are likely to be motivated if Gamification mphasizes achievement, success and progress. Players with a strong power motive are likely to be motivated if Gamification emphasizes status, control and competition. Players with a strong affiliation motive are likely to be motivated if Gamification emphasizes membership".
Behavioristic learning	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification provides immediate feedback in form of positive and negative reinforcement. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification offers rewards".
Cognitive	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification provides a clear and achievable goal. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification highlights the resulting consequences of a goal. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification emphasizes the importance of a persons' action within a given situation. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification fosters mastery orientation regarding goals".

Self-determination	"Players are likely to be motivated if they experience the feeling of competence. Players are likely to be motivated if they experience the feeling of autonomy. Players are likely to be motivated if they experience the feeling of social relatedness".
Interest	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification meets the players' interests and sparks interest for the situational context. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification enhances the feeling of flow by providing direct feedback. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification enhances the feeling of flow by providing a clear goal. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification enables the feeling of flow by adapting the level of difficulty to ones' individual skills and competences".
Emotion	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification decreases negative feelings like fear, envy, and anger. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification increases positive feelings like sympathy Emotionand pleasure".

Table 4. Psychological perspectives and implications

VII. Gamification Apps for Enhancing and Motivating Second Language Learning

The use of Gamification in L2 learning has brought the use of many tools to enhance the language learning process and motivate the learners. It's very important to remember that in a gamified classroom setting the tool will serve a purpose and it shouldn't substitute the target goal of the unit or module. This is also essential in L2 learning. With many tools to choose from in educational technology, the L2 educator needs to use them accordingly to the target audience and combine it with the appropriate language learning approach or strategy. These Gamification tools are frequently used in L2 learning: Duolingo, Class Dojo, Edmodo, Zondle, Socrative, and Brainscape.

a. Duolingo

Is a Gamification language learning translation platform where users progress through several levels. It works for iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, and Android. It covers the areas of speaking, listening, grammar and vocabulary necessary for L2 learning and content is always presented in whole sentences. The user can select between six languages including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, and French. The feedback is immediate and the learner can easily track progress. Educators can use it as part of daily homework. It motivates student-driven work along with communication and collaboration.

b. Class Dojo

Previously in the article, this application was presented as a pure example of Gamification. This main purpose of Class Dojo is to provide the instructor with a platform for student behavior management. It also helps in motivating L2 elementary school learners through strategies that combine avatars, points, and leaderboards. Parents can be involved and connect with the educator. It track, shares, and evaluate student participation along with immediate feedback. It lets L2 learners adjust to a new language by easing the transition in a flexible way. It can be accessed via the Web interface or an Android or iOS app.

c. Edmodo

It's a safe social networking platform for education with Gamification elements like badges and quests. It can be used as an extension of the classroom for all educational levels. In addition, it has an interface very similar to Facebook. Students can comment on posts, submit assignments, and track their progress. Educators can post polls, open discussion boards, design quizzes, and post assignment. It's a great motivating tool for L2 instruction because it promotes collaborative learning, teamwork, and parents have an account where they can receive feedback from the instructor. In addition the L2 learner can practice spelling and grammar through conversational postings and could create differentiated instruction through small groups and shared folders. Edmodo works with any Web browser, iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, Android, Windows Phone.

d. Zondle

It is a Game Based Learning platform that incorporates Gamification. Using it the educator can create quizzes and has plenty of content. Student will be engaged with the games. Most educators use it as a reward. It's great for homework and practice. The Zondle experience benefits L2 language instruction based on the exercises/quizzes it has. Also the progress tracking and other elements like avatars, leaderboards, and Zollars, which are elements that increases or decreases based on the answers to the quizzes and the engagement. Students can use Zondle thru web browsers, smartphones and tablets.

e. Socrative

Is a dynamic smart student response system that engages students via smart phones, tablets, and laptops, and empowers educators to formative and summative assessing their students. It's a great tool for the L2 classroom because students can answer questions forgetting about the stress involved in trials and errors, which lowers anxiety. It allows the users to import images to the question items and it feature Gamification strategies including live results, immediate feedback, and effortless data analysis.

f. Brainscape

Is a Web based and mobile app platform, which integrates customizable flashcard to track student progress. The method is known as confidence based repetition. It's a great enhancer and motivator for L2 vocabulary learning. In addition, it provides automatic feedback, reinforcement and specific phrases in the target language along with sentence construction. Audio is provided for the language cards. It demands students to think critically about their learning.

VIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be established that the use of Gamification in L2 learning contributes positively to the learning experience based on the information presented. At the same time learning interventions need to be taken with precaution. Gamification helps the L2 learner in plenty of personality factors. In addition the learner moves forward from an introverted mode of shyness and more motivated based on positive feedback and the game elements

used. Gamifying the L2 classroom enhances the learning of writing, reading, and speaking and motivates collaboration and interaction. Through Gamification the educator is able to create meaningful experiences that will move away from just a game thinking mentality to a techno-constructivist mentality. To achieve success with Gamification in L2 learning the objectives and goals need to be aligned and have formal assessment criteria. According to Fogg (2009), by selecting the proper tools positive changes in behavior will happen. There are still plenty of challenges in the L2 classroom, and by understanding the importance of Gamification in L2 learning they will be confronted with initiatives where students will be in charge of their own learning. Finally, how L2 learners work with intrinsic motivation is another challenge. Most of all, when extrinsic motivation through the use of reward systems could interfere with the main learning objectives and instead of enhancing motivation create a stage of boredom that could limit leaning the target language. There's still plenty of research to be done in the field of Gamification and Second Language Learning in order to have enough empiric evidence to sustain a theory. But as the article explained, by combining Gamification along with some of the new technology trends and L2 approaches and strategies, the L2 learner and becoming motivated is a strong possibility.

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Can Gamification be introduced within primary classes?

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Abstract

Training through gamification is everyday a more evident reality in Primary Education classes. The teachers' view about this has been modified as it is shown in the study published by aDeSe in 2012. However, does it really have place in the students' curricular development in the primary education stage? For the sake of responding to this question, we have carried out a descriptive study about the opinion that the future teachers from primary education have got about this "new" form of implementing the curricular contents. The sample, conformed by 244 students of second course of Media Literacy and Didactic Application of ICT, answered a questionnaire consisting of 23 questions, of which 14 are devoted to determine the attitude that future teachers have facing videogames and the remaining 9 indicate the educative dimension that they give to it within the primary class. The most significant initial result we find is that while they consider having a proactive view as users of this, women are less active within this tool, although the female teachers conclude, however, that it could be an attractive resource for the learning of the youngest students.

Keywords

ITC; videogames; training; pupils; curriculum; primary education

¿Puede entrar la Gamificación en las aulas de primaria?

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Resumen

La formación a través de la gamificación es cada día una realidad más latente de las aulas de educación Primaria. La visión que los docentes van teniendo de estos se ha ido modificando tal y como lo señala el estudio publicado en 2012 por aDeSe. No obstante, ¿realmente tienen cabida en el desarrollo curricular de los estudiantes de la etapa de educación primaria? En aras de poder responder a esta cuestión se ha realizado un estudio descriptivo de las opiniones que los futuros maestros de dicha etapa educativa tienen de esta "nueva" forma de implementar los contenidos curriculares. La muestra conformada por 244 estudiantes de 2º curso de la materia Educación Mediática y Aplicación didáctica de las TIC, respondió a un cuestionario compuesto por 23 preguntas, de las cuales 14 están destinadas a determinar la actitud que los futuros maestros tienen ante los videojuegos y las 9 restantes nos indican la dimensión educativa que les otorgan dentro del aula de primaria. El resultado inicial que más destaca es que si bien consideran tener una visión proactiva como usuarios de estos, las mujeres son menos activas en este medio, aunque ellas concluyen, no obstante, que pueden ser un recurso atractivo para el aprendizaje de los más jóvenes.

Palabras clave

TIC; videojuegos; formación; alumnos; curriculum; educación primaria

I. Introduction

The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has meant that different nature elements or elements with different perspectives have been developing not only under the safety net of Internet but also under the several tools which had been created before the technology peak. One of these tools is the videogames, which since their launch in the USA in the seventies up to today, have gone through various phases of love and hatred on the part of society. Right now, little by little and overcoming or moving away from their mercantilist view, we believe that they have opened a gap in the academic areas of children, youngsters and teenagers and not such teenage people today.

Covered by Horizon 2014 report (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estraday Freeman, 2014) as a tool which is worthy to take into account as regards the formation of children and youth from today, we consider that it is necessary to check if the trainers of social, political, educational and economic leaders from tomorrow share the same perspective. In the study we have presented below, we approach the reader to open and holistic perspective, where it is revealed how teachers at the initial training consider that while they are not expert players nor excessively keen on them, it can be a tool which invigorates and brings closer the curriculum contents of Primary Education, as well as the data collected in the report carried out by the *Tomorrow* Project (2008) or those collected in 2012 by the aDeSe association.

II. Is there an educational vision in videogames?

As Morales notes (2013), Pedagogy has always tried to innovate teaching, either from the addition of new resources or through the design of paradigms or theories covering the changes, sometimes turbulent, by which society passes, and one of those resources and also one of those changes is the incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to teaching-learning processes. The different legal regulations which have been developed in recent decades, such as the Organic Education Act (2006) and the Organic Act of Educational Quality Improvement (2013), make reference to a new way of teaching and learning, based on a series of competences called basic. In both cases, it is mentioned the digital and informational ability of students, which must be achieved after having completing the primary stages. While in the early stages (Early Childhood Education) it is made reference to the need to initiate students into a digital and media literacy, in all the reviews made in these regulations, the emphasis is put on the development a critical view of digital media which are now available to everyone. In conclusion, the learning process of the twenty-first century means that the students can have access, analyze, evaluate, create and consider in order to lead curricular practice into action (Hobbs, 2010) supporting them in ICT.

Against this background of technological excess, some resources are being adapted to the environment, whereas others evolve to survive in the technological jungle, which has seen the rise of Web 2.0 tools born under the fast and explosive growth of Internet. One of these technologies is videogames. Demonized by some people, when back in the 50s they ousted traditional television the throne of the means devoted to occupy our leisure and free time, being classified as violent, as submitting an excessive number of erotic scenes, as encouraging the consumption of various substances, as giving a vision of life far away from reality or presenting the image of a distorted woman, as promoting obesity and poor diet, as

isolating the subject from its close family, and so on (Marín, 2014; Marín and Maldonado, 2014). Such aspects have not made the advantages or positive views which they can have of them, have been despised, since they allow us to develop and exercise creativity, imagination and symbolic games; to work social skills in the socialization processes of the individuals and the repetition of behaviours until perfection; to promote the increase of attention, motivation for learning, the changing of unhealthy behaviours, the learning doing or the active learning (GBL); to appreciate different cultural values, the development of critical thinking, construction and reconstruction of knowledge, the creation of reflection processes (in and for the action), the collaboration, the ability to react to adverse situations, the faculty to solve problems, the development of spatial skills, the effective use of information; to enhance attention and memory, verbal and nonverbal language, the ability to work collaboratively and cooperatively, the desire for self-improvement, the eye-hand skills, etc. (Killiemuir & McFarlane, 2003; Barendiegt & Bekker, 2011; Watson, Christopher & Harris, 2011; Contreras, 2013; Alamri, Hassan, Hassain, Al-Qurishi, Aldukhayyit & Hossain, 2014; Marín, 2012; Marín, 2014; Marín and Martín, 2014; Márquez, 2013; Mortaraa, Catalanoa, Bellottib, Fiuccic, Houry-Panchettid & Petridise, 2014), elements which make possible their incorporation into classrooms at all educational levels. It is true, as García Cortés and Lacasa (2014) point out, that video games named as "*serious games*" have been used for a long time in the classrooms. However, our vision tries to incorporate into the classroom methodology those videogames used by students in their leisure time, so that when relating something daily, something that for them means a relaxation and pleasure moment, and which will not be linked to the training strictly speaking, the student will acquire the contents in a playful way without being aware that he or she is "studying" (Azorín, 2014). In this line, we find the results presented by Williamson in 2009, which reflected that 60% of teachers taking part in his study about the videogames use in the British classrooms, weighed positively to include them in the teaching methodologies and 55% of them was using them with good results. The works by Cortés, Gómez, and LaCasa (2012) related to the introduction of a non-serious or educational game like *Sims 3* or by Téllez and Iturriaga (2014), based on the *Assassin's Creed* saga or by Nieto, Téllez and Cannon (2014) with the *Body and Brian Connection* game, is also a proof that this reality is gaining a greater presence every day. As Valverde, Alicia and Revuelta indicate (2013: 149), "which better way to learn without being aware of it and to be able to transmit and evoke concepts which are present in our minds".

III. Methodology

The research we present is born from the question: Can videogames modulate the learning behaviours? Can they be tools helping to develop the learning in an effective and efficient way? From these questions the starting objectives have been:

1. Determining whether videogames are elements which can modulate behaviours, affecting the belief systems, values, attitudes, aptitudes of students.
2. Clarifying whether videogames are a technological resource which can help in understanding of the curriculum contents.
3. Establishing whether the methodological systems must employ them in the classrooms in order to improve their atmosphere.
4. Checking whether education should take them into account from a didactic and pedagogical perspective.

IV. Data Collection Instrument

a. Instrument Construction: reliability and validity

For the collection of the data, the survey method was used, and within this the questionnaire technique is found. In this case, we used the same employed by Marín (2014), which is composed of 23 items, with different scales of answer, grouped into two dimensions. So, items 1 to 14 form part of the dimension 1 called "Attitude towards videogames". They had an answer choice of a nominal kind: yes, no, not know/no answer. The second group, which has been entitled "Videogames and the primary classroom", is composed of 9 items with a Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree. In order to verify that the questionnaire measured what it had been set in the objectives to be achieved and that in turn it answered to the starting questions, it was tested for validity and reliability.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach alpha test has been applied. Once the test was performed to the whole questionnaire, a reliability of 0,903 was obtained, what, according to Mateo (2012) can be considered as high.

Carried out the discrimination item by item (see Table 1), it was found that the reliability of the instrument ranged between 0,903 and 0,896, so that reliability can be assured in each of the items.

Item	Conbrach Alpha
15. Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	0,903
16. Distinguishing the body parts.	0,893
17. Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	0,891
18. Identifying primary and secondary colours.	0,886
19. Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	0,892
20. Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	0,885
21. Development of inductive thought.	0,890
22. Development of the visual and retentive memory.	0,896
23. Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	0,892

Table1. Reliability item by item. Source: Own production

Next, it has been considered to carry out an exploratory analysis between the scale variables proposed in the instrument, seeking to endow it with validity, in order to find out the latent factors existing in the same; for this purpose, and as Marín García shows (2011), we have performed the following analysis: descriptive statistics of the variables and an exploratory factorial analysis with the maximum authenticity.

As regards the descriptive statistics of the instrument (see Table 2), it can be observed that the scale variables ranging between the 241 and 244 cases; the minimum of the most of them is 1 and the maximum is 5, coinciding with the opposed extreme values. With respect to the average, the values range between 3,51 and 3,91, so we can maintain that there is a considerable variability (minimum and maximum values) and a moderate degree of use in the variables by the participating students (averages).

	Min.	Max.	M.	S.
15. Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	1	5	3,59	,983
16. Distinguishing the body parts.	1	5	3,63	,902
17. Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	1	5	3,53	,906
18. Identifying primary and secondary colours.	1	5	3,72	,911
19. Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	1	5	3,71	,836
20. Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	1	5	3,54	,862
21. Development of inductive thought.	1	5	3,57	,821
22. Development of the visual and retentive memory.	1	5	3,91	,788
23. Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	1	5	3,90	,868

Table 2. Descriptive study of dimension 2. Source: Own elaboration

In conclusion, in view of the results it can be observed that two latent factors will exist within the instrument scale.

Finally, it has been carried out an exploratory factorial analysis with the maximum authenticity with the intention of subjecting to validation the scalar items, as it has been indicated before, giving as a result that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin adequacy measure gives a value of 0,837, close to 1, which indicates that it is feasible to perform the exploratory factorial analysis. Also, the Bartlett test of sphericity throws significance ($p < 0,001$).

Factor	Initial self-values			Sums of the saturations to the extraction square			Sums of the saturations to the rotation square		
	Total	% of the variance	% accumulated	Total	% of the variance	% accumulated	Total	% of the variance	% accumulated
I like playing videogames	4,514	50,156	50,156	4,075	45,283	45,283	2,673	29,703	29,703
I read specialised magazines about videogames	1,337	14,857	65,013	,914	10,159	55,443	2,317	25,739	55,443
I read through Internet everything which is new related to videogames	,708	7,869	72,882						
I read in the case the classification of the videogame before using it	,602	6,687	79,569						
I like making comments of the videogames with my friends or acquaintances	,537	5,963	85,532						
I take part in forums or chats about videogames	,421	4,682	90,213						
I have taken part in online "parties"	,371	4,122	94,335						
I imitate the characters from the videogames I play with	,279	3,100	97,435						
I like playing videogames for adults	,231	2,565	100,000						

Table 3. Total variance explained. Source: Own production

Subsequently, we have analyzed the variance extracted by the retained factors. As you can check, there are two factors or scales on which all the results are based: the first of them explains the 45,28% and the second one, the 55,44% of the variance, implying that these nine items or questions from the questionnaire are divided into two scales or factors.

Next, it has been analyzed the factorial matrix and the rotated factors matrix of the items studied. As it can be checked in Table 4 we have obtained two factors, on which the scalar items are based. In the rotated factors matrix (see Table 5), it is stated which item or question from the questionnaire would be classified in each factor: in other words, a scale would be composed by the items 23, 20, 19, 22, 21 and 17, and the other, by the items 20, 21, 16, 18, 15 and 17; items 20, 21 and 17 could be included in any of the two factors, although due to their value, the items 20 and 21 would be in the first scale and the item 17 would belong to the second scale.

	Factor	
	1	2
Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	,801	
Distinguishing the body parts.	,694	-,459
Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	,691	
Identifying primary and secondary colours.	,686	-,413
Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	,666	,371
Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	,651	,316
Development of inductive thought.	,630	
Development of the visual and retentive memory.	,625	
Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	,592	,347

Extraction method: Maximum authenticity. ^a. 2 extracted factors. 4 interactions required

Table 4. Factorial matrix. Source: Own production

	Factor	
	1	2
Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	,736	
Distinguishing the body parts.	,711	,418
Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	,687	
Identifying primary and secondary colours.	,666	
Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	,665	,307
Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).		,813
Development of inductive thought.		,774
Development of the visual and retentive memory.		,590
Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	,328	,567

*Extraction method: Maximum authenticity. Rotation method: Varimax normalization with Kaiser. ^a. The rotation has converged in 3 interactions

Table 5. Rotated factors matrix. Source: Own production

b. Population and sample

The population participating in this study was the students from the Primary Education Grade, in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the University of Cordova. The participant sample was finally consisted of the students enrolled in the course Media Literacy and Didactic Application of ICT, a compulsory subject in the second year of the degree. Given the compulsory nature of the subject, it was decided to administer the instrument in its sessions, as in such a way the students participation would be higher. Finally, it has been obtained a participation of 244 subjects, from whom 161 were women and 83 were men. According to their age, we have checked that it is located at the frequency of 19 years old (136 subjects), followed by the 20 years old (99 subjects) and ending with 21 years old (9 subjects).

Considering the contingency sex-age (see Figure 1) it can be checked that the presence of women is higher in the three age ranges identified.

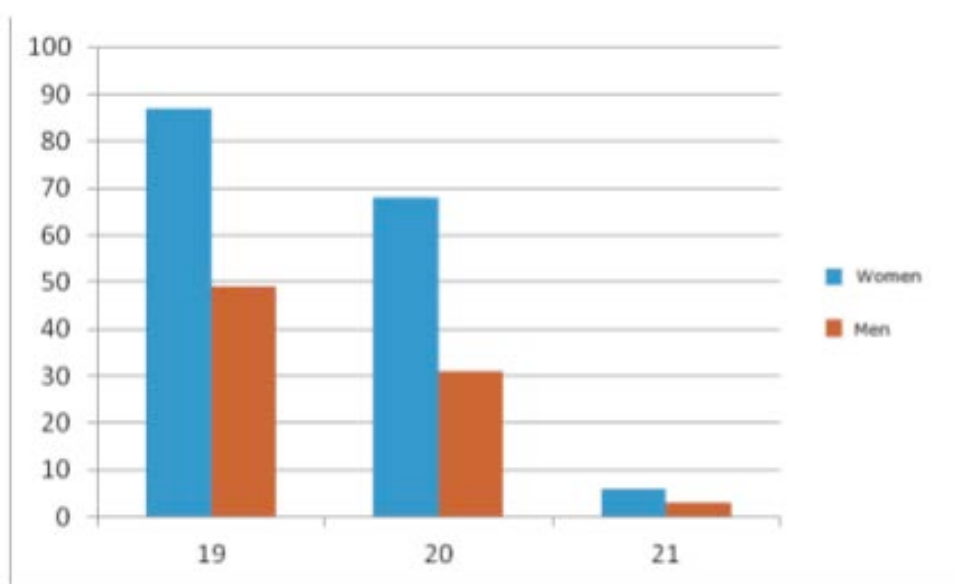


Figure 1. Sample distribution according to the age. Source: Own production

V. Results

a. Descriptive study

As it can be found in table 7 (Dimension 1: study of frequencies and percentages) it is determined that students participating in this study tend not to like playing videogames, and therefore they do not read specialised magazines on the topic nor they participate in chats, forums or online parties about videogames unlike the results obtained in the study of Marín (2014) where the sample studied liked videogames, playing videogames and reading specialised magazines, as well as talking with their colleagues and friends about them. However, it is significant that they consider that videogames can be educational, that they like to there be more in this line and the fact that they have used any of educational character (items 10, 12 and 13).

	YES	NO	NK/NA
1. I like playing videogames	104/42,6%	137/52,1%	3/1,2%
2. I read specialised magazines about videogames	6/2,5%	238/97,5%	
3. I read through Internet everything which is new related to videogames	10/4,1%	234/95,9%	
4. I read in the case the classification of the videogame before using it	49/20,1%	194/78,3	4/1,6%
5. I like making comments of the videogames with my friends or acquaintances	80/24,6%	161/74,2%	3/1,2%
6. I take part in forums or chats about videogames	7/2,9%	233/95,5%	4/1,6%
7. I have taken part in online "parties"	26/10,7%	214/87,7%	4/1,6%
8. I imitate the characters from the videogames I play with	9/3,7%	234/95,9%	1/0,4%
9. I like playing videogames for adults	82/25,4%	165/67,6%	17/7
10. Videogames can be educational	177/72,5%	57/23,4%	10/4,1%
11. The teacher uses videogames in class	30/12,3%	189/77,5%	25/10,2%
12. I would like there would be more videogames	189/77,5%	42/17,2%	13/5,3%
13. I have placed educational videogames in some occasions	162/66,4%	68/27,9%	14/5,7%
14. Playing videogames affects my studies negatively	35/14,3%	148/60,7%	61/25%

Table 7. Dimension: Study of frequencies and percentages. Source: Own production

As it can be observed in Table 8, the students participating in this research agrees that videogames can be seen as a tool to work collaboratively and to help to develop the curriculum contents related to natural sciences, particularly with the human body in general. They are positioned in the same way for the contents related to the visual arts and the development of heuristic and inductive thought, as well as the visual and retentive memory. Similarly, they consider agreeing with the fact that educational games help in the inductive learning and with the basic concepts of success and failure, up and down, inside-out, before-after and front-back.

2. Dimension: Videogames and primary classroom		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	f. 11	22	56	122	33
		% 4,5%	9%	23%	50%	13,5%
2.	Distinguishing the body parts.	f. 7	13	80	107	36
		% 2,9%	5,3%	32,8%	43,9%	14,9%
3.	Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	f. 9/	17	77	115	25
		% 3,7%	7%	31,6%	47,1%	10,2%
4.	Identifying primary and secondary colours.	f. 8	13	58	126	39
		% 3,3%	5,3%	23,8%	51,6%	16%
5.	Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	f. 5	15	52/	139	30
		% 2%	6,1%	22,5%	57%	12,3%
6.	6. Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	f. 8	15	92	104	27
		% 2,5%	6,1%	37,7%	42,6%	11,1%
7.	Development of inductive thought.	f. 7	11	83	123	20
		% 2,9%	4,5%	34%	50,4%	8,2%
8.	Development of the visual and retentive memory.	f. 4	7	43	144	46
		% 1,6%	2,9%	17,6%	59%	18,9%
9.	Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	f. 6	7	47	127	55
		% 2,5%	2,9%	19,3%	52%	22,5%

Table 8. Dimension 2: Videogames and primary classroom. Source: Own production

b.T test

Once the Student t test for independent samples ($ns = 0,05$), taking the sex as the classification variable, it is found that the existence of significant differences in all the questionnaire items is in favour of men as regard the items "Learning to Learning work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork", "Distinguishing the body parts", "Identifying the primary and secondary colours", "Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake)", "Development the inductive thought", "Development of visual and retentive memory" and "Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-out, before-after, front-back" and in favour of women as regard the items "Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs" and "Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment)".

c. Bivariad correlation

In regards to the r coefficient test by Pearson to determine the existence of correlation between the items of the second dimension, in Table 9 the results related to dimension 2 are available, - remember that it is the one with the answer modality of scalar type-, and you can check that items have a full correlation with a significance level of $n=0,001$, although the relationship between them varies according to the categorization made by Pérez, García, Gil and Galán in 2009, in response to each item, among the low of item 19 to 15 ($r=0,248$), the average of item 22 with the 16 ($r=0,330$) and the high of the item 16 with the item 18 ($r=0,647$).

		Item 15	Item 16	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21	Item 22	Item 23
Item 15	R	1,000	,448**	,456**	,493**	,248**	,408**	,427**	,349**	,262**
	P		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 16	R	,448**	1,000	,615**	,647**	,403**	,450**	,385**	,330**	,400**
	P	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 17	R	,456**	,615**	1,000	,551**	,439**	,500**	,425**	,290**	,379**
	P	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 18	R	,493**	,647**	,551**	1,000	,468**	,587**	,440**	,380**	,455**
	P	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 19	R	,248**	,403**	,439**	,468**	1,000	,588**	,487**	,429**	,579**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 20	R	,408**	,450**	,500**	,587**	,588**	1,000	,580**	,468**	,545**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
Item 21	R	,427**	,385**	,425**	,440**	,487**	,580**	1,000	,495**	,456**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000
Item 22	R	,349**	,330**	,290**	,380**	,429**	,468**	,495**	1,000	,564**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000
Item 23	R	,262**	,400**	,379**	,455**	,579**	,545**	,456**	,564**	1,000
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	

** . The correlation is significant at the level 0,01 (bilateral).

Table 9. Descriptive study dimension 2. Source: Own production

VI. Conclusions

Quintanal in 2013 (419), carried out a study in which he suggested participants developing the curriculum in the subjects of Physics and Chemistry by means of mini-kits. The main

result that he concludes is that through them autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem of students increased. He also concluded that "it helps to fulfil the educational objectives in terms of contents, skills (especially social ones) and values; it promotes consideration of the learning rates, of teamwork and of the progress of intellectual skills; it develops and enhances the students' ICT skills and the consideration of them as creators of scientific content which can share with their peers". Following

this line, the results presented with the objective 1, indicate that the attitudes of prospective teachers to educational videogames is positive (Contreras, 2013) following the line of Herrero, del Castillo, Monjalet, García-Varela, Checa and Gómez (2014), which may be included within the development of methodologies within the classroom when exercising their profession. However, it is noteworthy that their attitude towards them is negative in contrast with the results obtained by the study conducted by Marín in 2014 on a sample of the same kind. It is significant to note that perhaps the fact that the study sample by Marín (2014) was made up of more men than women, because as it also happens in the studies by Graves, Ridgeers and Scratton (2008), Hamlen (2011) and by Lam, Sit and McManus (2011), where the male population indicates they play more and they consider them to be more attractive. Therefore, this divergence has been obtained within the general overview of videogames.

As regards the objectives 2, 3 and 4, and like the results by Watson, Mong and Harris (2011), we can conclude that active learning, as well as the development of heuristic thought (Killiemuir and McFarlane, 2003), the knowledge construction and collaboration can be developed through the usage of videogames in the classroom (Solano, Forero, Gino, Cavanzo and Pinilla, 2013). Another aspect whose learning is considered to be feasible of being developed through videogames is the content related to natural sciences and to the knowledge of the human body, coinciding with the study by Shane, Pettit, Margenthal and Smith (2008). The results obtained related to the overemphasis of participatory and collaborative behaviours are in line with those achieved by Greitemeyer and Mügge (2014).

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Strategies of collaborative work in the classroom through the design of video games

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Abstract

At the present time, the use of video games goes beyond mere amusement or entertainment due to its potential for developing capacities, dexterity and skills. Thus, video games have extended to environments like that of education, serving as didactic resources within dynamics that respond to the interests and necessities of the 21st century student. In this study, we approach the design of video games in initial teacher training. In this respect, we aim to collect the student's views regarding the learning process of the different tools used for designing video games within a framework of collaborative learning. The investigation is approached through a quantitative methodology applying a 28-item questionnaire on the learning experience of designing video games. We used a sample of 200 second-year students majoring in Childhood Education during the 2013/2014 academic course. The results obtained show that the students value in a positive way the collaborative learning methodology for mastering the video games designing tools.

Keywords

Video games, collaborative learning, higher education, ICT

Estrategias de trabajo colaborativo en el aula a través del diseño de videojuegos

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Resumen

En la actualidad, el uso de los videojuegos va más allá de la mera diversión o entreteniendo, debido a su potencial para el desarrollo de capacidades, destrezas y habilidades. Por tanto, los videojuegos se han extendido a ámbitos como el de la educación, empleándose como recursos didácticos dentro de dinámicas que responden a los intereses y necesidades del alumnado del siglo XXI. En este estudio, abordamos el diseño de videojuegos en la formación inicial docente. Al respecto, pretendemos recoger las opiniones del alumnado en relación al aprendizaje de las distintas herramientas empleadas para el diseño de videojuegos en el marco del aprendizaje colaborativo. La investigación la abordamos desde una metodología cuantitativa, a través del uso de un cuestionario de 28 ítems, sobre la experiencia de aprendizaje vivida en el diseño de videojuegos. Se ha trabajado con una muestra de 200 estudiantes pertenecientes al segundo curso de la titulación de Grado de Maestro especialidad en Educación Infantil, durante el curso académico 2013/2014. Los resultados obtenidos muestran que el alumnado valora positivamente la metodología del aprendizaje colaborativo para la adquisición del dominio de las herramientas utilizadas en el diseño de videojuegos.

Palabras clave

Videojuegos, Aprendizaje colaborativo, Educación Superior, TIC

I. Introduction

In our current society, Information and Communication Technologies (hereinafter ICTs) have become an everyday tool being that, among other things, provide us instant access to information from any location and contribute in a significant way to the communication processes. In the field of education, the importance of ICTs is even greater, as they enable stimulation and language development, increased self-esteem, motivation and social interaction (Díaz, Reche & Lucena, 2005). In this respect, Martin & Tyner (2012) state the importance of the school in its role to permeate the students with a series of essential values and skills in order not to confuse the schooling and usage of ICTs as a technological acquisition intended to create consumers and users of new technologies and that prevents seeing the purposes sought by education through the use of these means. In this sense, ICTs appear as a resource of great value to promote participation in all sectors of society, particularly in education, where a series of advantages can be noted, such as (Cabero & Córdoba 2009):

- Helping to overcome the limitations derived out of cognitive, sensory and motor disabilities.
- Promoting independence and autonomy.
- Fostering communication.
- Timesaving for the acquisition of skills and abilities.
- Facilitating diagnosis.
- Encouraging an individualized education where everyone can advance at their own pace, which is of great importance for people with disabilities. (p.73)

In this concern, the educational centers have progressively adapted to the new social demands, introducing technological improvements that are not only limited to a classroom with computer equipment, but that are targeted, for example, to design work dynamics that include the use of learning platforms, tablets, digital whiteboards or even didactic video games, which is the main focus of this study.

In this regard, it should be highlighted that the intervention design shown in this study is focused in designing video games through a collaborative learning methodology to develop a series of essential skills for the initial teacher training, such as:

- Knowing and mastering the user's level in the ICTs field.
- Knowing the learning implications of ICTs, particularly, of television during early childhood.
- Approaching field analysis through an observational methodology using ICTs, documentation and audiovisuals.
- Encouraging initiation experiences to ICTs.
- Analyzing audiovisual languages and their learning implications.
- Controlling and following-up on the educational process, particularly, teaching and learning through the mastering of necessary techniques and strategies.

It is therefore not a Game-Based Learning (GBL) strategy since this would be the second stage of the investigation, which takes place as the video games designed in the Early Education classroom are implemented.

II. Initial Teacher Training as a Response to 21st Century Schooling

The introduction of learning dynamics in classrooms of any educational stage requires several aspects- teacher training being the most decisive element. In this regard, prospective teachers should acquire a qualified education in order to be able to respond to the new student profile featured in today's classrooms. In this respect, Martin & Tyner (2012) consider that these "new literacies" are neither more nor less than another addition to rudimentary, yet still necessary, literacy, since the large majority of information used in the 21st century comes from digital resources. On the other hand, Martin (2007) points out that learning when to use the new technology equipment is essential provided that is supplemented with didactic training. Additionally, due to a fast-evolving digital era, teachers should be constantly acquiring new technology skills, thus making lifelong training essential to adapt to the changing needs of our society. On the other hand, Díaz, Reche & Lucena (2005), show that in order to be able to achieve satisfactory teaching and learning dynamics, it is necessary to address aspects, such as:

- The educational contents: these should adapt to the culture and the context that we live.
- Improving the infrastructures: to be able to include all these IT resources, which provide access to information and didactic online contents.
- A better organization of the educational system: to be able to provide customized training for all, motivating those institutions that promote and offer courses that respond to the demands of various groups such as adult literacy and usage of new IT resources.

Finally, De la Peña (2011) emphasizes that we won't be able to predict the future, but what we should be certain about is that there will be more technology within our reach and that education will continue being a basic necessity for all of society.

III. Video Games as a New Learning Tool

Video games have been considered for years as resources exclusively designed to target leisure, amusement or entertainment needs. However, if we analyze closely the elements that comprise a video game (script, time, goals, environment, main characters...), we can observe that many of them contain pedagogic components of great value in regards to their design. Nevertheless, in order to implement Video Games-Based Learning methodologies, it is crucial to analyze the proper title selection in terms of the intended goals. In this sense, "the teacher must have clear criteria for planning its usage and integration in the classroom; know the different game types and their time requirements, the existence of various strategies, etc." (Gros, 2009, p. 256). In this respect, we can mention, for example, a mythical strategy game that had great repercussion worldwide, as was Age of Empires (1997). This game showed the features of different ages (Stone Age, tools, Bronze...), as well as civilizations (Greek, Persian, Phoenician...). The goal was to defeat the other civilizations through the management of resources (wood, stone, gold...), which allowed the construction of buildings with different essential functions for the achievement of the goal. To all this we must add the selection of numerous campaigns that transported the user to the eras of Alexander the Great, Archimedes or Joanna the Mad, while turning the player into

the main character of this history chapter. Other video games applied in learning methodologies are, for instance, the classic *Carmen Sandiego en el Mundo*, where students have to catch a felon travelling from one country to the other and learning things such as the country's currency, its flag colors, etc. (Gros, 2000); as well as some titles such as *Deus Ex*, *Half-Life*, *The Sims*, *Rise of Nations*, *SWAT IV*, *Civilization*, *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* whose structure is far more complex due to the diversity of settings in which the main character is immersed and the elements that he can interact with in order to reach the goals proposed and that, because of the number of possibilities and alternatives to solve the enigmas posed, require the development of skills (Gee, 2005). In this sense, as Marín, Ramírez and Cabero (2010) stated, the video games are shown as resources that encourage learning and motivation in students by having an interactive, accessible and dynamic nature.

As for the educational possibilities of videogames, it's worth noting, among others (García Marín 2005 of and; Pindado, 2005; Pérez - Latorre, 2011; Morales2013):

- Increased motivation for learning
- Development of creativity and imagination.
- Enhancing the learning ability to learn.
- Strengthens self-esteem and self-concept.
- Development of critical and reflexive thinking.
- Promotes collaborative and cooperative learning.

Ultimately, video games comprise an important didactic resource whose development and design should be part of the initial teacher training of any stage. This study shows the learning process followed for designing and developing video games used in Early Childhood Education College programs. Several IT tools were used for its making with specific roles that allow preparing different video games elements, such as those detailed in the next section.

IV. Video Games Designed Through a Collaborative Learning Methodology

Nowadays there are many tools intended for designing educational video games - one of them being *e-ADVENTURES*, a software developed by the Complutense University of Madrid, that facilitates creating interactive games under two visual modalities: 3rd person (the main characters appear on the screen) and 1st person (omission of the main character). An example of the video game type that can be created with this tool is found on the worldwide hit known as *The Secret of Monkey Island* (1990). This game was a graphic adventure in which the lead character had to interact with different characters and/or scene elements to attain his goals. In addition to this tool, there are others such as *Alice* that allows creating 3D animations through a relatively easy-to-use interface which enables creating stories, interactive games or videos; and *MissionMaker* which allows creating 3D landscapes where the main character exists in the first person. However, no specific tool for designing video games was used in this study; instead, we used software whose main goal is creating an e-learning course, as is the case of *CourseLab*. The substantiation of using this resource in learning dynamics is found in a series of aspects, such as:

1^o. It is a free tool in its 2.4 version

2°. It has a similar setting to MS Office, which is a very familiar program to the overall student population.

3°. The insertion process of the different video game elements in this software is very intuitive and open and is not "corseted" in sections that are also comprised of subsections, making the procedure a much more complex one while hindering the learning process.

4°. *Courselab* integrates the so-called *Actions*, that allow students "to program" different types of interactions based on the user's intention without needing IT knowledge. This process is set up in 3 stages: Events, Actions and Objects.

5°. The final result is produced in *HTML* format which allows for a smooth integration in websites, educational blogs, learning platforms. Etc.

6°. It allows inserting any type of multimedia element such as audio, video, JAVA applications, Shockwave, Flash...

7°. Ultimately, it is a tool constantly updated that adapts to the continuous changes produced in browsers, add-ons, plugins, etc.

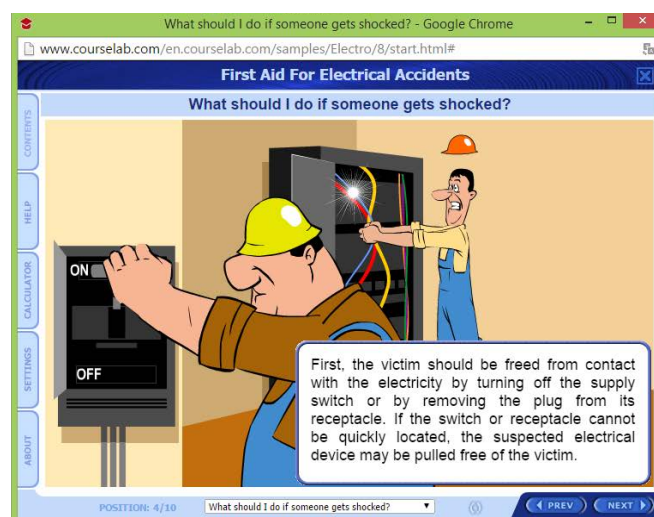


Figure 1 shows an example of the type of materials that can be made using *Courselab*.

Fuente: <http://www.courselab.com/en.courselab.com/samples/Electro/8/start.html#>

The learning dynamic carried out in this study is a product of the joint work of two subjects taught in the second year of the Early Childhood Education College program: Planning and Innovation in Early Childhood Education and Media Education and Educational Dimension of the ICTs.

The former is taught in the first semester of the academic year and allows students, among other things, to acquire the basic knowledge for preparing and developing a didactic programming as well as a didactic unit that will serve as basis for designing the video game. The students will also learn how to pinpoint learning objectives from the general information contained in the regulation in force as well as to establish the contents, methodology and corresponding evaluation approaches to outline a series of activities to be carried out with certain resources that allow students to achieve these objectives. All these elements will

form the context of a videogame that meets the educational needs of students depending on the course of the stage where they are. On the other hand, the second subject is taught in the second semester of the academic year and it will allow the future teacher to acquire the necessary skills for creating a videogame. In this regard, it should be noted that said degree is comprised by 3 class-groups, and thus, a total of 4 teachers intervene in said dynamic who will coordinate amongst themselves at least 4 times per year (twice per semester). This process is divided in several phases specified below:

1. Introduction Phase: It exposes students to the methodology used for teaching the subject while focusing on the group creation of a videogame as a point of interest. At this time, we note the importance of considering the entire body of work completed in this first-year subject, since it will comprise the core issue of the resource, as well as the reference for the goals, contents and evaluation approaches. In this sense, we emphasize the importance of carrying out an authentic collaborative learning, since it is fundamental that each member of the group masters the technique of each of the tools used in order to pass the individual final exam (Domingo, 2008; Moríña, 2011; Torrego and Black 2012).
2. Technique Mastery Acquisition Phase: Upon this time, it will be explained to the students all and each one of the computer applications that are necessary for creating the video game, which are as follows:
 - *Audacity*: Application for producing and editing audio. This program is essential so that each group can prepare its own narratives and endow the main characters of the videogame with a voice.
 - *Microsoft Windows MovieMaker*: Tool for producing and editing video files. It allows the group to create small audiovisual projects regarding the pursued goals. In the Early Childhood Education phase, the instructional videos are of particular interest due to the psycho-evolutional features of students.
 - *Gimp*: Application for editing and creating images. This tool enables creating environments, characters, and also altering images previously created by hand.
 - *Courselab*: This is the most important tool for creating the videogame, since it allows integrating all the resources produced by the applications above. In this regard, it enables creating interactive elements, integrating web pages with multimedia activities, developing learning paths based on user responses, videogame connection with learning platforms, etc.
3. Scripting Phase: Once the students know the methodology plan as well as the IT tools to be used, they will be asked to write a script for their video games, clearly specifying the following elements: story or plotline, context, main characters, goals, evaluation system and awards, without losing reference of the goals, contents and criteria from the previous (didactic unit) work. "The designer shall apply his conceptualization capacity and knowledge of various multimedia expression areas that may intervene in the realization of the video game as well as his ability to

project several aspects and tasks of the audiovisual and multimedia realms". (Morales, 2013, p.107).

4. Video Game Creation Phase: This is the last stage of the dynamic where students will implement all the knowledge covered in the previous phases to create the video game. In the words of Morales (2013), "the designer must maintain at all times an overview of the project covering its fictional world, structure and interaction rules, and its pedagogical approach ... which should also meet his learning expectations." (p. 108).

Regarding the type of video games created by students, most of them are based in stories whose characters must overcome a series of tests in order to reach certain Objects that will allow them to reach to the end. These tests are activities that respond to the previously established goals, contents and criteria. We might say that is a game style similar to that of *Dora the Explorer*.

The duration of the complete instruction-teaching process comprises the academic course semester with a total of 70 classroom hours. In the sessions theory and practice are not separated since all classes are both theoretical and practical by following the method known as *EAR*, that is, Explanation, Application and Resolution of doubts. Therefore, in each of the session that are part of the established dynamic, some video game design aspect is explained, followed by immediate group application of said explanation and possible resolution of doubts or difficulties that may come about during the process. This procedure largely ensures that everyone can learn in a satisfactory manner.

V. Investigation Design

a. Objectives

The overall purpose of this study is focused on analyzing the views of students on the collaborative learning experienced in the process of creating a video game. This general objective is achieved by the following goals:

1. Describe the views of university students on the contributions of video games within the process of collaborate learning.
2. Analyze the differences among the views of university students according to gender and age.

b. Participants

The study received an incidental sample of 200 students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Undergraduate Program at the University of Córdoba, for the subjects above. The group of participants is divided by gender as follows: 152 women (76%) and 48 men (24%). Age can be divided into three statistically distinct ranges: 18-22 years old (72.6%), 23-26 years old (22.3%) and 4.1% between 27 and 43 years old.

c. Instrument

To achieve the research objectives established, we applied upon completion of the experience, a Likert scale questionnaire designed to assess the experience of game development in groups with the help of *CourseLab* using 28 items. This quantitative approach was chosen because we thought it would be best suited for this type of students. They do not want to waste time to describe their experience in class or perform personal interviews and a survey with Likert scale seems a clear and direct method to collect information.

In such items, shown in Table 1, students will assess the level of agreement or disagreement with each statement on a scale of 5 levels (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was designed along the observation in previous years. The pilot test to validate the questionnaire was conducted with 40 people the previous year, with similar characteristics to the final sample. In the questionnaire questions related to ease of use and other applications with the utility of video games to achieve the objectives of the curriculum they are included. These questions were introduced to eliminate biases in data collection, because the students are validating their work.

After collecting and computing the data gathered in this survey, we proceeded with a quantitative analysis using SPSS (version 20.0). Thereupon, we performed Cronbach's reliability test for the instrument using the full sample and obtaining a 0.886, which seemed sufficient. In addition, the instrument has the age, gender and Internet and smartphone or tablet availability as socio-demographic variables.

Additionally and with the intent of gathering information during the development process experience and to help us better understand and appreciate the experience, we have taken into account the contributions collected through participant observation, field notes, student interviews and document analysis. Two teachers participated in the process of collecting information, comparing notes and impressions at the end of each session.

Indicate the level of agreement with the following statements regarding the creation of a video game as a group using *CourseLab* and other programs, according to the following rating scale: Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neither Agree nor Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5).

- 1) *Do you have a computer at home?*
- 2) *From where do you usually access the Internet?*
- 3) *Do you have a tablet?*
- 4) *Do you have a smartphone? (Mobile Phone with Internet)*
- 5) *Do you have internet service?*
- 6) *Empowers collaboration with other colleagues*
- 7) *Facilitates communication between students*
- 8) *Promotes personal relationships with colleagues*
- 9) *Promotes interactions and collaboration among students*
- 10) *Encourages the students to feel part of the group*
- 11) *Stimulates new relationships*
- 12) *Enables connecting with others outside of our class group*
- 13) *Encourages students to participate*
- 14) *The application settings are intuitive*
- 15) *The application settings are easy to use*
- 16) *The tool does not require prior knowledge of computers*

- 17) *It facilitates sharing content*
- 18) *It took great effort learning how to use the tool*
- 19) *I had difficulties learning how to use the tool*
- 20) *It took me a long time learning how to use the tool*
- 21) *There was time during class for the teacher to answer questions which enabled mastering the tool as a fundamental aspect of the process*
- 22) *Would use CourseLab for curricular development in various areas of the course or level*
- 23) *Video games help develop the different proposed targets on the core curriculum for Primary Education established in Royal Decree 1513*
- 24) *Video games are useful for students to delve into the Internet*
- 25) *Video games are an adaptable activity for current IT support*
- 26) *Video games are an activity that increases student motivation through the inclusion of multimedia resources and not just text and image*
- 27) *Digital gaming is an activity that encourages autonomy in students*
- 28) *Developing video games can foster relationships through the establishment of groups for its implementation*

Table 1: Test of views on the process of collaborative learning with CourseLab, after the group designed a video game.

Participant observation allowed us to be part of the group class during the course of the sessions. It was important to make us feel like a member of the group, experiencing from within that "reality". Through field notes, we collected the events taking place in the classroom; difficulties encountered by students were: learning the technique of making mind maps, questions or issues learning to use the software required for game designing, issues regarding selection, prioritization, etc. These notes contain detailed information on the context of the classroom, as well as the different and continuous social interactions that occurred between groups. The works created as a result of developing the subject favored this analysis, in terms of collecting more information. The documents analyzed, as mentioned above, are mainly working scripts. The quality of these has been part of the learning evaluation process. Finally, unstructured interviews allowed us to steer questions in a more flexible and open manner, allowing the students to express their ideas, concerns, feelings, etc.

d. Data Analysis

The information collected was analyzed using univariate descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, median and standard deviation for describing students views, estimating averages and analyzing the distribution and dispersion of responses (Pérez, García Gil y Galán, 2009).

To compare student perceptions under different grouping variables, we used a bivariate type of analysis which specifically contrasts mean differences. Also, in the case of variance analysis, multiple comparisons "post hoc" were performed to analyze specific groups among which occur the differences found. To this end, we administered the Tukey test when variances were equal and the Games-Howell test if otherwise (Catena, Ramos and Trujillo, 2003). Finally we estimated the effect size of mean differences using Cohen's *d*, whereas a value of .20 indicates a small effect, a value of .50 a moderate effect and a value of .80 or above a large effect (Cohen, 1977). The data set analysis was performed mainly using the

statistical program SPSS v. 20.0. In all tests administered statistical significance was established at a level of $p \leq .05$ (confidence level 95%).

VI. Results and discussion

The description of the opinions of university students on the contributions of video games in the collaborative learning process is performed on the stage of interviews with students and at the stage of validation tools for collecting information.

Table 2 shows the main results of the analysis in order to analyze the opinions of pupils on the usefulness of the activity. Particularly, frequencies and percentages were analyzed according to the block-related activity regarding work items 6 to 28. The question block 1-5 is essentially to rule out individuals who are not part of the group object study.

ITEMS	1		2		3		4		5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
6) Empowered collaboration with other colleagues	3	1,5	12	6	39	19,5	82	41	64	32
7) Facilitates communication between students	7	3,5	10	5	48	24	76	38	59	29,5
8) Promotes personal relationships with colleagues	19	9,5	24	12	84	42	51	25,5	22	11
9) Promotes interactions and collaboration among students	1	0,5	13	6,5	51	25,5	78	39	57	28,5
10) Encourages the students to feel part of the group	8	4	11	5,5	41	20,5	79	39,5	61	30,5
11) Stimulates new relationships	14	7	19	9,5	85	42,5	47	23,5	35	17,5
12) Enables connecting with others outside of our class group	8	4	15	7,5	74	37	62	31	41	20,5
13) Encourages students to participate	3	1,5	6	3	52	26	77	38,5	62	31
14) The application settings are intuitive	1	0,5	11	5,5	96	48	51	25,5	41	20,5
15) The application settings are easy to use	0	0	12	6	87	43,5	59	29,5	42	21
16) The tool does not require prior knowledge of computers	8	4	43	21,5	64	32	47	23,5	38	19
17) It facilitates sharing content	4	2	53	26,5	46	23	52	26	45	22,5
18) It took great effort learning how to use the tool	34	17	48	24	75	37,5	24	12	19	9,5
19) I had difficulties learning how to use the tool	33	16,5	52	26	71	35,5	28	14	16	8
20) It took me a long time learning how to use the tool	34	17	49	24,5	62	31	30	15	25	12,5
21) There was time during class for the teacher to answer questions which enabled mastering the tool as a fundamental aspect of the process	8	4	32	16	20	10	54	27	86	43

22) <i>Would use CourseLab for curricular development in various areas of the course or level</i>	5	2,5	54	27	29	14,5	61	30,5	51	25,5
23) <i>Video games help develop the different proposed targets on the core curriculum for Primary Education established in Royal Decree 1513</i>	2	1	12	6	45	22,5	63	31,5	78	39
24) <i>Video games are useful for students to delve into the Internet</i>	15	7,5	24	12	43	21,5	51	25,5	67	33,5
25) <i>Video games are an adaptable activity for current IT support</i>	4	2	15	7,5	32	16	65	32,5	84	42
26) <i>Video games are an activity that increases student motivation through the inclusion of multimedia resources and not just text and image</i>	5	2,5	12	6	33	16,5	66	33	84	42
27) <i>Digital gaming is an activity that encourages autonomy in students</i>	3	1,5	26	13	44	22	56	28	71	35,5
28) <i>Developing video games can foster relationships through the establishment of groups for its implementation</i>	21	10,5	33	16,5	49	24,5	59	29,5	38	19

Table 2: Frequency (and percentage) in the different items of the questionnaire (6-28)

The study results show firstly, a set of views regarding the influence of the educational experience for improving learning at an individual level. The majority of university respondents that participated in this experience enabled the understanding of issues and may have favored solving the learning difficulties of the different thematic units.

On the other hand, other reviews are linked to directly influencing the experience for improving social interactions and collaborative learning. The vast majority of students valued very highly the process of developing a strategy game as set in the curriculum.

Processing data from a gender perspective showed no significant differences regarding the perception of usefulness of the tool between men and women. The dispersion of data broken down by gender was only 5%.

As per age, no special differences of opinion were detected between the youngest and the small percentage of older students. In this sense, it can be expected that older people feel less affinity for using video games in education, however, older students also often have greater motivation to learn new teaching techniques, so the dispersion found from the perspective of age was less than 3%.

It should be noted that for the students part of the sample, the implementation of this experience positively influenced teamwork for developing and producing digital games shared through a process of collaborative learning and implemented in *CourseLab*.

VII. Conclusions

This paper analyzed both the individual and group impact within the initial teacher training, for developing video games through the *CourseLab* application as a learning tool for planning a subject. The results showed that the interaction between groups and the improvement of positive classroom climate allowed the achievement of meaningful learning through new tools while expanding the use of video games beyond pure entertainment.

During the course of the sessions, the exchange of ideas and opinions among students, allowed them not only to interact but discuss what was important while generating the construction of shared knowledge, fostering respect and an appropriate work climate within the group. In this regard, permanent classroom observations about their work along with testimonies from the respondents showed a significant change of attitude towards group work in the university classroom. We have also observed that students can quickly learn how to manage the *CourseLab* software to develop video games, prepare presentations that facilitate communication in the classroom and add many other types of educational resources in digital format (text, sound, images, video, web pages...).

The assessments made by prospective teachers about this tool and its educational applications are quite positive. Therefore, we believe that the use of this resource to develop classroom activities is a realistic and effective integration of ICTs in education, helping to enrich the learning process.

Through additional registers used in the experiment, we have compiled a series of reviews that highlight a positive assessment regarding the process and understanding of the main functions of game design. In this case, the theoretical content of the course and solving problems of understanding as well as implementing processes for learning how to learn, resemble a model quite close to the constructivist view of teaching thinking processes for teaching evaluations.

Individual and group involvement contributes to creating a positive climate for guiding individual action as a condition for group action in the construction of parts of the game, which enhances the cooperation of the group activity.

In conclusion, the development of this study was possible due to objectives reasonably achievable. However, we are aware that the number of participants in this research is not large enough to consider that the results are generalizable, so we should collect more data in subsequent years and extend the experience to other degrees.

This preliminary work is important to encourage the development of games as a collaborative tool in teacher training.

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Why do gamers buy 'virtual assets'?

An insight in to the psychology behind purchase behaviour

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Abstract

The present study investigated the phenomenon of buying 'virtual assets' for game avatars. Virtual Assets are items that are bought with real-world money for an avatar in-game. Weapons, items, pets, mounts and skin customisations are the most popular examples. Using a qualitative methodology – in this case Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) – six gamers that regularly bought in-game assets were interviewed. IPA was chosen because of its emphasis on lived experience, and each participant had subjective experiences of gaming and purchase behaviour. Of particular focus in this study were the superordinate themes of motivations for purchase behaviour, the resulting psychological impact on the gamer, the social benefits of gaming and virtual asset purchasing, emotional attachment, self-expression through the avatar, impulsivity versus thoughtfulness in purchase intention, and the impact of a transaction machinery on the 'game experience'. Motivations that were found to be of particular importance were item exclusivity, function, social appeal, and collectability. It was found that virtual items enable the gamer to express themselves, feel real satisfaction, and build lasting friendships. Essentially, virtual assets and gaming mostly had a very positive impact on the participant's psychological wellbeing. Implications for gamers and games production companies are considered.

Keywords

Online gaming; Online purchasing; Buying virtual assets; Interpretative phenomenological analysis; Qualitative research

I. Introduction

Video gaming has evolved from a single-player platform to a multi-player realm where interaction with other players is often a necessity (Pontes & Griffiths, 2014). In order to enter the game, players must first create an avatar, a representation of their self in the game that is used to explore and interact with the virtual environment. When creating an avatar, players can also buy virtual assets to augment and/or enhance their online character. Virtual assets are items or customisations for video game avatars, bases, and characters that are purchased with real money.

For researchers, the buying of virtual assets provides an opportunity to try and understand why people become so immersed in games and what motivates gamers to spend real money on items that some would consider as having no value. In a multi-player environment, it becomes clear that the avatars seen on screen are graphical representations of someone real and may be part of human desires to be noticed, respected, and interacted with. Furthermore the gamer controlling their avatar has motivations, emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Virtual item purchases are therefore likely to impact on a gamer's psychological wellbeing.

The virtual item industry across the globe is worth an estimated \$15 billion (Nayak, 2012). The growing market for virtual items indicates that transactions are becoming commonplace in gaming. Manninen and Kujanp (2007) suggest that an environment that humans interact within will develop humanistic economics, highlighting to those involved in the transactions that there is a real value attached to virtual items. The virtual market functions similarly to real markets in that there is demand, fluctuating markets, and profits to be made. The importance of virtual items to some people is illustrated by a divorce claim in which a wife made a claim for over half of her husband's virtual assets (Hyped Talk, 2010). In a different case, Qiu Chengwei, a middle-aged man killed a fellow gamer over a dispute involving a virtual item (Lee 2005). Obviously these cases are extreme but they highlight the fact that virtual items can have both financial and psychological value for gamers.

But why do people buy virtual items? Performance and general quality of an item is seen to be an important motivation whether the item is real or virtual (Lehdonvirta 2009). Online, an appeal to social status may be a better predictor for purchase behaviour than function (Li, 2012). However, some claim that appealing to social status has no motivational significance in purchase behaviour (Guo & Barnes 2011). Another unique element of buying virtual items is the potential exclusivity. Exclusive or limited items tend to be unattainable through gameplay and instead must be bought with money. Exclusivity online has been shown to be of importance, and segmentation is a technique used by the games producers that limits certain items to certain classes, levels, or races. This has been shown to stimulate purchase behaviour (Hamari & Lehdonvirta 2010). The amount of time invested in a game is also key to understanding spending patterns, and gamers will often buy virtual items after a dedicated amount of gameplay has been spent building an avatar (Kaburuan, Chen & Jeng, 2009). A further difference between the real and virtual is that in-game, a player is judged essentially on their material goods and the effectiveness of their items, where how hard they are to acquire becomes a measure of skill and achievement and impacts on the player's popularity (Lehdonvirta, Wilska & Johnson 2009). For example, a player with rarer items will likely have had to gain them through being good at the game. Though there could be different motivations for purchasing virtual items it is evident that a major ingredient to a

successful multiplayer game is the enabling of social interaction (Griffiths, Hussain, Grüsser, et al., 2013).

Naturally, the longer the amounts of time that are spent online and in-game, the more the player emotionally and psychologically invests in the game (Griffiths, 2010). The concept of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1992) has been applied to gaming and can involve becoming emotionally attached to a character (Hull, Williams & Griffiths, 2013). Flow is the feeling of complete absorption in an activity and affects consciousness and emotions of the individual experiencing it. A key element of feeling 'flow' is the experience and perception of the world of the avatar and has been applied to electronic media (Witmer & Singer 1998). The adaptation of 'flow' to the virtual world suggests that just like other leisure activities, an individual investing time in an environment where they feel socially accepted can become emotionally attached to their avatar. Gaming has been shown to affect consciousness and emotions of gamers (Tay 2005) that are both necessary in experiencing 'flow'. It could be that purchasing of virtual items is also motivated – at least in part – by the feeling of emotional attachment to an avatar.

Gamers are being drawn in to an environment by the appeal of social interaction, manipulation of objects, exploration, and identification with the avatar (Griffiths et al., 2013; Witmer & Singer 1998). To some gamers, the virtual world can take on more significance than 'actual' life and residency in their preferred games is what they consider their actuality (Castranova & Wagner 2011; Pontes & Griffiths, 2014). This suggests that the reward of gaming is great, indicating that those individuals who buy virtual items are doing so because they feel involved in an environment that benefits them personally. The differentiation between the real and virtual raises questions about a person's identity. The issue of the true/ideal self has been explored by Kim, Lee and Kang (2012) who found that virtual items contributed to identification with the avatar and this identification reaped psychological benefits for gamers who might otherwise lack confidence. The 'ideal self' links to the avatar as an extension of the self. In the same way as choosing clothes for themselves, gamers may select virtual items such as weapons and vanity items (such as pets, mounts, and skin customisations) in order to portray their identity through their avatar. It could also be the case that an avatar is a medium to test an unrestrained side of one's personality that otherwise might not get noticed (Hussain & Griffiths, 2008). To date, there has been little research on why gamers buy virtual items. Huang (2012) reported that affective control, identity, involvement, cognitive involvement, flow, and communication with other players are major influences in purchasing virtual assets.

Given the lack of empirical research, the present qualitative study examined the (i) motivations for purchasing virtual items, (ii) psychological impact of purchasing virtual items on self-esteem and confidence, (iii) social benefits of gaming and virtual asset purchasing, (iv) emotional attachment to an avatar, (v) choice of items and customisation of the avatar as a form of self-expression, (vi) impulsivity versus thoughtfulness in purchase intentions of virtual items, and (vii) impact of transaction machinery on the 'game experience' from a gamer's perspective. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, the study was exploratory and aimed to understand the psychology underlying purchase intention of virtual items and assets among online gamers.

II. Method

a. Participants

The participants were recruited from the research team's university gaming society. Participants volunteered to take part in the research after a talk given at a society meeting indicating that gamers from a multiplayer background where money can be spent for in-game items were required as part of research into 'virtual assets'. Prospective participants were notified that gamers of all genres were required including online strategy games, massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), and social media site games. To be included in the study, the gamers had to have spent money on virtual assets (irrespective of how much they spent buying virtual gaming item). A total of six gamers were interviewed (see Table 1 for socio-demographic details). A small sample was selected in order to keep with the ideographic nature of IPA (Smith 2004).

Participant	Sex and age	Preferred game(s) played
Participant 1	Male, 19	Battle Pirates
Participant 2	Male, 18	Guild Wars, World of Warcraft
Participant 3	Female, 21	World of Warcraft
Participant 4	Female, 21	World of Warcraft, League of Legends
Participant 5	Male, 22	World of Warcraft, Lord of the Rings Online, Farmville
Participant 6	Male, 29	Entropia, Diablo III, League of Legends, Guild Wars 2

Table 1. Summary of gamers' socio-demographic characteristics

b. Research design and methodology

The present study utilized a qualitative methodology – in this case interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) – due to its focus on lived experience. IPA like many other qualitative methodologies provide much 'richer' data than that collected via quantitative surveys. IPA is a useful tool that has the potential to provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data collected. IPA allows participants to disclose thoughts on their experiences (Smith 2004). Participants were recruited using a variant of purposive sampling (Willig, 2001). Patton (2002) highlighted the importance of selecting participants based on their ability to provide rich data, making purposive sampling the most effective method of recruitment for an IPA study. In the present study, each participant had unique experiences of purchasing virtual items and assets, and IPA enabled each participant to share their thoughts with the researchers. Interpretative phenomenological *analysis* "offers an adaptable and accessible approach to phenomenological research intended to give a complete and in-depth account that privileges the individual" (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty & Hendry 2011, p.20).

Analysis of the interviews is carried out by initial familiarisation with the transcriptions of each interview. Any emerging themes are highlighted and brought together to establish superordinate themes. Superordinate themes are selected by the researchers depending on how salient they were deemed to be. Each superordinate theme contains a number of specific focus areas and these are categorised as subordinate themes. It is possible for IPA to contribute to theory and understanding at a much more detailed level than quantitative

approaches (Pringle et al. 2011) as the experiences are subjective. Each participant comes from a different background and has different experiences with virtual item and asset purchasing.

c. Procedure

All the gamers underwent a semi-structured interview. They were informed that the study aimed to explore the purchasing of 'virtual assets'. Each interview lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. Gamers were assured that all data were confidential and anonymous. Gamers were notified that if they felt uncomfortable with any questions that they did not need to answer and they could withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview up until a specified date. The gamers were notified that the interviews were being recorded for transcription purposes. The study was granted permission by the researchers' University Ethics Committee.

The analytic process was essentially idiographic where each case was analysed in its entirety before commonalities across the transcripts were extracted and retained as the essence of the experience of buying virtual assets. Each cluster of themes was provided with a super-ordinate descriptive title that accounted for the incumbent themes. Continuing the idiographic nature of the study, care was taken to interpret data and extract themes on a case-by-case basis initially. After each of the six transcripts had been independently analysed and reduced into hierarchical thematic structure, attempts were made to merge the thematic structure of each transcript into a more coherent, global model that maintained the essence of the phenomena being studied.

In order to maintain credibility of analysis, the interpretative process and the final model of super-ordinate and their sub-ordinate themes were audited by the second author (Smith, 2003). There was a dialogue with the second author who ultimately was satisfied with inductive reasoning and representation of data. Finally, the agreed hierarchical structure of themes was transformed into a narrative account, supported substantially with verbatim extracts. The inclusion of a substantial amount of verbatim accounts is important as it retains the voice of the participants while also providing an opportunity for the reader to critically appraise the interpretations made by the researcher (Newton, Larkin, Melhuish, & Wykes, 2007).

III. Results and preliminary discussion

Seven superordinate themes were identified as a result of interviewing the gamers: (i) *Motivation for purchase*, (ii) *Social aspects of the gaming and purchasing*, (iii) *Emotional attachment to the avatar*, (iv) *Psychological reward and impact*, (v) *Self-expression*, (vi) *'Stock market gaming' and gaming culture*, and (vii) *Research/impulse buying*. These are highlighted Subordinate themes have been identified and pooled.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes
Motivation for purchase	Necessity, exclusivity, function, commitment, impressed by/impressing others (social shopping), collectability/'cool factor'
Social aspects of gaming and purchasing	Real and lasting friendships, replacement for going out
Emotional attachment to avatar	Yes/no, pride, emotional enjoyment
Psychological reward/impact	Superiority, true/ideal self, self-torment, satisfaction, immersion
Self-expression	Role-play, extension of self, detached from avatar
'Stock market' gaming and gaming culture	Stock market gaming, ruining of game experience
Research/impulse buying	Recommendations, impulse buying, trying items on

Table 2. Summary of superordinate and subordinate themes regarding buying virtual assets (n=6)

a. Motivation for purchases

To a non-gamer, the motivation for purchase behaviours may seem simple – the item has a function and is superior to the current item that holds its place on the avatar. While function was a recurring theme for some of the gamers, there were more meaningful and unique motivations. These are expanded upon below.

Item exclusivity

Virtual items are not often thought of as degradable or 'limited' in any sense, as they are a result of programming code. However, when there is a time limit on the availability of items, the urgency to obtain the items increases. It was observed across most of the interviews that exclusive items with expiration were the items in which most money was spent by the gamer.

Extract 1: *"Because of Christmas they had this winter coat that made my character quite like a pimp, so I got these shades as well which made me look pretty cool"*
(Participant 2)

Extract 2: *"It was mostly if it was limited edition and it was going to run out"*
(Participant 3)

These extracts suggest that the fact the item is going to expire provokes the gamer in to purchase behaviour. This has been supported by research by Lehdonvirta, Wilska and Johnson (2009) who found in *Habbo Hotel* (an online life simulation), that the rarity of an item was indicative of its importance. In *Habbo Hotel* there is no in-game currency so items that were more exclusive became symbolic of success. However it must be considered that for the gamer, if an item can be obtained by working instead of purchasing, then the gamer is likely to spend time (as opposed to money) achieving it.

The influence of others (social shopping)

In an environment where the gamer is exposed to interaction with other players, the items themselves take on a meaning of expression and success. For most of the participants, the fact that someone else could see an item they had obtained was of significant importance. In a community where personality traits are not prevalent and a reliance on the observable is, items took on a social role. This has been termed 'social shopping' and has been explored by Hassouneh and Brengman (2011). They found that compared to psychological motivations for purchase behaviour online (e.g., self-esteem), social motivations were of equal importance (e.g., highlighting to other players that they are successful, or establishing a point of discussion). Hassouneh and Brengman's (2011) findings were supported by the present research.

Extract 3: "You see people with that stuff and think "oh wow, they look cool" and I want it as well and want that same first impression and social status so it's kind of copying because that's how they made you feel when you first saw them wearing that or showing their pet off and you think I want to have that effect on other people" (Participant 4)

Here, the term "social status" is used by Participant 4. The purchasing of virtual items for some gamers has potential to appeal to social status and increase the gamer's standing in the virtual world. To be impressed with another gamer's items is a feeling that makes an impression on some gamers, and that they may want to recreate.

Extract 4: "In World of Warcraft, one person had a mount and I asked them where they got it...a year later it went down to £10 and I thought I'd buy it because it still looked really good" (Participant 5)

Extract 4 is useful as it not only indicates that being impressed by another gamer's items is a key motivation for virtual item purchase behaviour, but it also highlights that seeing an item that stands out leaves a lasting impression which led to the purchase of the same item. An appeal to social status does not only apply to online friends. Participant 2 suggested that appealing to his friendships in real life was a motivation for buying certain items:

Extract 5: "We try and make each other's characters the blackest and with most outrageous hair but I didn't have very outrageous hair. I didn't have this so I felt a need to buy it so I could joke with him" (Participant 2)

The purchase of virtual items for Participant 2 served a purpose in a real social setting. Similarly to gamers influencing other gamers, he felt the necessity to buy hair for his avatar in order to make his friend laugh. Virtual items appeal to sociality, and social shopping leads to the possibility of more respect from other players or even the facilitating of a joke among real friends. It could perhaps be suggested that the research by Li (2012) and Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) in which social factors were shown to be the most influential purchase predictor are more consistent with the findings of the present study than Guo and Barnes (2011) who found social factors had little significance in purchasing behaviour.

Purchase behaviour as sign of commitment, predominant pastime

Typically, the longer the length of time spent on any hobby the more likely it is to lead to some sort of monetary investment. This is also true of gaming.

Extract 6: *"I played for seven years so that's, I kind of used that time frame as a reason as to why I could buy stuff for the game"* (Participant 4)

Justification for purchase behaviour was necessary for Participant 4. In order to buy items for their character, gamers have to have spent what they consider a justifiably large time investment. This investment can be considered to contribute to attachment of 'sentimental value' to virtual items, especially when spending real money on them.

Extract 7: *"It has a sentimental value more than the actual value. Especially if I'm buying it with real money it's got more sentimental value"* (Participant 5)

The spending of real money on items must be attributable to having considerable "sentimental value" attached to the game. This sentimental value then gets attributed to the items in which the gamer has spent a large amount of time to achieve. Compared to single-player games, multi-player games require much more time commitment online. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that each gamer had spent an average of 20 hours per week online – a considerably large time commitment. Gaming as a 'predominant pastime' was a recurring theme:

Extract 8: *"It's what I do in my spare time"* (Participant 1)

Extract 9: *"I'm playing about 2-3 hours a night. It can be anywhere up to 6 hours so quite a lot"* (Participant 5)

Gaming has evolved in to something more than a leisurely activity. The games offer an investment and the purchasing of virtual items is viewed as a justifiable time commitment. The items then appear to develop sentimental value. Therefore, it is expected that monetary investment will occur at a certain threshold over time. This is consistent with Kaburuan et al.'s (2009) finding that gamers will start purchasing behaviour once a dedicated amount of gameplay has been reached.

Function, Necessity to progress

Supportive of Lehdonvirta's (2009) findings that item quality is an important motivation for purchase behaviour, the present research also highlights the importance of function.

Extract 10: *"Functional things that can help me in the long-term, that's why I buy those things"* (Participant 5)

It seems logical that function is a key motivation. However, attached to the importance of function is the use of transactions as a necessity to progress in-game. Similar to buying items is the option to buy in-game currency in order to buy upgrades and items. It is up to the gaming companies to decide how exactly they capitalise on this, but to gamers it is expected that real money investment aids their progression through the game.

Extract 11: *"You do go in and you know what to expect, they've not got to that level by playing without 'coining' "* (Participant 1)

Here, Participant 1 terms the buying of gold as "coining", the game's nickname indicative of the acceptance of currency purchasing within the gaming environment. Although the gamers may clearly see companies nudging them towards spending money, necessity to progress and function remain motivations underlying purchase behaviour of virtual assets and is supportive of research findings by Lehdonvirta (2009).

Collectability/`Cool Factor`

Novel items can also be collected by gamers. Some examples of novel items (or `vanity items`) are collectible pets, mounts, clothing, and skin/hair customisations. The collectability or `cool factor` also played a role as a motivation for buying virtual items among some of the gamers:

Extract 12: *"They were pet and mount collectors which is why they spent money, they wanted all of them"* (Participant 3)

For Participant 3's guild members, some items were classed as collectibles. In this case the items are `vanity items` as they have no functional benefit for the avatar. Therefore, something aesthetic or virtually superficial proved to be a motivating factor in buying virtual items. This was also the case for Participant 6 who placed importance on items having the "cool factor".

Extract 13: *"I tend to go for things not because they will be make me better at the game but for the cool factor, not more efficient"* (Participant 6)

When considering motivations for virtual asset purchasing for gamers, function alone is not enough. There are more superficial features of the items that also appeal to social status. Exclusivity and collectability must also be considered, as well as (in some cases) "coining", viewed as an accepted necessity to progress in-game.

b. Social aspects of gaming and purchasing

When spending large amounts of time in an environment populated by other people, it is almost inevitable that the gamer is going to have to interact with some of them. Research by Tay (2005) highlighted the possibility of building friendships online, and was supported by findings in the present study. Gaming offered a medium for building enduring friendships and these are important when considering why gamers purchase virtual assets. Purchase behaviour could be a result of spending time in a socially rewarding environment. One participant no longer spends as much time in the game as they used to but still remains in contact with the friends she met through the game.

Extract 14: *"Since quitting I still talk to everyone so it's, we weren't just friends in game"* (Participant 3)

The online game was also a replacement for going out for some gamers. The social aspect offered by the game was as beneficial to the gamer socially as going out with friends. The game was more suited to some people socially than socialising in a real environment is (something that has also been reported in previous research [e.g., Cole & Griffiths, 2007; Griffiths et al., 2013]).

Extract 15: *"I'm able to jump straight out of the box online because in theory I'm hidden but viewed in a different way at the same time"* (Participant 4)

The `barrier` of being behind a computer screen when interacting with others meant that for Participant 4, social interaction carried less threat and she could "jump straight out of the box" online. She had no need to hold back in social interactions online. This was evident in other gamers:

Extract 16: *"I feel I get more satisfaction and more enjoyment [playing online games] than going out drinking"* (Participant 1)

The alternative social aspect of the game was also important to these participants as they felt social satisfaction. The benefit for the gamers' social lives is an appeal of the games themselves. Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) suggested the environment and social aspects of the in-game world with things such as freedom from embarrassment and the absence of rude staff contribute to a more enjoyable shopping experience in the virtual world. 'Flow' in electronic media is reliant on the feeling of 'social presence' (Witmer & Singer 1998). Social presence is a result of social interactions and feeling emotional response to other gamer's actions. It could be that the feeling of immersion in the game and the resulting purchase behaviour could be due to the fulfilment of social needs enabled by the game.

c. Emotional attachment to avatar

Research has shown that it is possible for gamers to become emotionally attached to their items and avatar (Rab 2007). In terms of attachment in the present study, some gamers felt that they were attached to their avatar and items. When the gamer was attached, it was seen to influence feelings of pride and impact on the emotion of the gamer:

Extract 17: *"I have guild members who considered it a point of pride to have all these items"* (Participant 3)

Pride is one feeling attributed to emotional attachment to items. In Participant 3's case, the guild members placed more emphasis on obtaining certain items than she did, but the items did influence the positive feelings of attachment felt by her friends. Linked to the notion of pride is the emotional investment in the game.

Extract 18: *"If it's got a sappy ending I'm crying my eyes out but watch [the film] 'Titanic' and I'm cold hearted"* (Participant 4)

Here, Extract 18 summarises how encapsulating gaming is for Participant 4. The environment provides a medium in which she can *feel* her character's story and invest emotion into the development of her character. An interesting point to consider is that those gamers in the sample who considered themselves unattached to their avatar spent less money on virtual assets. One participant explicitly stated the necessity for emotional attachment in purchase behaviour:

Extract 19: *"I would have gone for that in a heartbeat because I put a lot of time in to that game and I was really attached to it. Attachment is definitely important in purchasing"* (Participant 6)

Attachment is important in the purchasing of virtual items as Extract 19 highlights. As previously mentioned, those who spent less money on virtual items were less attached to their avatar and those who were more attached to an avatar were more attached to the items and were likely to spend more. This is related to research by Bowman, Schultheiss, and Schumann (2012) who found that attachment to the game influenced pro-social or anti-social behaviour of their participants. Just like pro-social or anti-behaviour, purchase behaviour may also be influenced by emotional attachment. Participant 1 was a less serious spender and emphasis was placed on emotional attachment being important in his spending patterns.

Extract 20: *"You do get a lot of people who get emotionally attached because of the money put on...Me personally, I wouldn't say I'm emotionally attached"* (Participant 1)

This addresses how money spent on the game increases attachment for a gamer. Considering how emotional attachment can influence and be influenced by spending is supportive of the findings by Bowman et al. (2012).

d. Psychological reward and impact

Gamers mentioned feeling psychological reward as a result of purchasing virtual items. Only one of the gamers mentioned feeling no satisfaction with their virtual item purchases. Item purchases impacted on the feelings of self-esteem as a result of being 'better' than other players. The motivation of superiority to other players is consistent with the 'reward' element of the 'Model of Desire' in purchase behaviour by Eyal (2012) in that the gamer is being rewarded for spending. The following extract highlights this feeling.

Extract 21: *"If I feel good and I know that most other players don't have it, it makes me feel better about myself"* (Participant 4)

Extract 21 exemplifies the reward of purchasing items. Psychological reward is evidently important in purchase intention and notions of the 'ideal self' and 'self-torment' were raised (see below).

Ideal self: For Participant 4, online gaming provided a medium to express her true self. Her real self was not the way she interacted and acted in real life, it was the way she interacted and acted through her avatar in-game. This has been explored by Hussain and Griffiths (2008) who suggested that simulated environments give people a chance to explore their personality and test boundaries which is hard to do offline. It has also been found that gamers wished to portray their 'ideal self' through 'Wishful Identification' (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005) where the user felt greater self-efficacy and satisfaction if their avatar had a vast range of powerful items (Kim et al. 2012). The present study supports this finding.

Extract 22: *"You have this personality but you can't show your real self and true self in person and it's easier to be able to do it online"* (Participant 4)

The importance of social interaction online has been discussed, but attention should be drawn to how important it is to some gamers. For Participant 4, expression of her true personality was the main motivation for gaming and virtual asset purchasing. She was able to portray what she felt her actual self was without real life limitations. The gaming world is a medium for this portrayal. She used the term "*perfect*" to describe her avatar:

Extract 23: *"I always create myself with like massive elf ears and perfect skin, eyes, just the perfect look. I'm not going to be able to look like that in real life I might as well imagine myself, portray myself as looking like that in my own mind online"* (Participant 4)

To be "*perfect*" online is a major motivation here. Self-expression and identity have been shown to be of major importance in purchasing of virtual assets (Lehdonvirta 2010). For Participant 4, it could be that expression of her ideal identity was a strong motivation for gaming and purchasing.

Self-torment

The lack of self-torment associated with shopping for items for an avatar meant that virtual shopping was more enjoyable than real world shopping for Participant 4. Shopping for her actual self was associated with negative emotions such as disappointment, but when it came to shopping for avatar items this was not the case:

Extract 24: *"I torment myself with it. With clothes I try it on; I don't look good and just put it back. I don't have the same self-torment that I do with buying online items"* (Participant 4)

Here, self-torment linked to the psychological reward of buying items. There was more psychological reward from buying items online than in the real world. However, it must also be acknowledged that for some gamers there are differing levels of emotional attachment and although the gamer may have feelings of attachment, there is a decision as to whether the purchase can be justified. Taking in to account how they will feel after buying an item is important:

Extract 25: *"I always do the calculation, if it's a virtual asset it's always going to be a luxury purchase...Can I justify this to myself?"* (Participant 6)

Here, self-torment is associated with feelings of disappointment and justification, perhaps like real world shopping. A decision must be made over spending to acquire an item and the gamer must be able to justify spending. It appears that purchasing virtual items can have very real psychological benefits on self-esteem and confidence. The findings of the present study are also consistent with the 'reward' aspect in the 'Model of Desire' suggested by Eyal (2012).

e. Self-expression

Self-expression appears to have had significance as to why virtual items are purchased. Previous research has highlighted that self-expression occurs online through avatars (Kim et al. 2012). This was consistent with the findings from the interviews in the present study. One of the gamers was an actor, and role-playing motivated his buying of virtual items, creating a role for his character an extension of his desire to act:

Extract 26: *"It's like improvised acting within the game; you take on a role...rather than just playing a game and thinking in numbers you take on elements within with world and its history"* (Participant 2).

Virtual items can provide a means to creating character story and history. Creativity is a channel that can be opened in the online gaming world and virtual transactions are a possibility to further customise and express oneself through the avatar.

Extract 27: *"I like the creative side of creating my characters and I usually base my first character on me and what I believe my primary traits to be"* (Participant 2)

The avatar as an extension of the self was recurring theme among the interviews. However, Participant 5 felt the avatar was a detached entity from the gamer. In relation to success online, he expressed his mental detachment from other gamers and their avatars. Whilst he may know them in real life, he saw the avatar separately to the gamer:

Extract 28: *"When I play with my friends I don't interpret them as I do in real life, I interpret them as their avatar"* (Participant 5)

It could be argued that the avatar is therefore an opportunity to create a more successful self. There is a unique nature of self-expression online. One can at the same time express themselves through their character and act how their avatar would be expected to. There is no contradiction in this mentality. At the same time, it is possible to be oneself and someone more desirable as highlighted by Extract 29.

Extract 29: *"Anything I'd say was going through my head like 'is this something my character would say?'"*(Participant 6)

The purchasing of assets enables the gamer to customise their avatar in order to express themselves online. This supports the findings of Kim et al. (2012) who highlighted that it was necessary for gamers to identify with their avatar and this has potential to contribute to greater self-efficacy through 'wishful identification' (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005).

f. 'Stock market' gaming and gaming culture

The option to buy items had significant impact on the playing experience for the gamers in the sample. One gamer expressed his concern over the opportunistic nature of making money in-game and its resulting dominance over the enjoyment factor of playing due to having to spot the best times to buy and sell items. It has been observed by Garrelts (2009) that *"the economic systems in place also created several problems relating to "accumulated wealth and real estate," players creating characters solely for economic gain"* (p.1). This is something that some gamers voiced concern over:

Extract 30: *"It killed a lot of the fun aspect of it as everything was suddenly viewed as this financial transaction...I would look in the auction house for trends, buy low and sell high rather than actually playing the game itself"* (Participant 6)

Participant 6 felt that once the end of the game has been reached, the items became opportunities to make a profit rather than enjoying the game for its content:

Extract 31: *"There is always that looming button on the screen which is like 'hey, you know that new item you just got for your character, why don't you sell it?' "* (Participant 6)

Supportive of Garrelts (2009) claim that item markets can establish too much focus on transactions, the present research found the introduction of an official transaction system changed the *"game experience"*. Too much focus can be placed on knowing in-game markets. One gamer spoke about how games with immersive storylines are more enjoyable and engaging than *"stat bashing"* games. This has implications for how much impact an item can have on the gaming experience and this should be taken in to consideration by games developers who need to consider how much importance individual items have in-game. For researchers, it is important to consider the impact items have on gamers.

Extract 32: *"In Neverwinter Nights which is basically dungeons and dragons online I was playing a role...Whereas playing something like Diablo or World of Warcraft, no I don't really care. That's a batch of stats and killing potential"* (Participant 6)

Too much focus on the items themselves can lead to a devaluation of assets as gamers may be more inclined to spend on 'role' focussed games where having the best items holds less importance. Despite potentially affecting the gaming experience for players, virtual items can

take on a deeper meaning than coding within a framework. Games developers must consider this when creating transaction machinery for players to use.

g. Research and 'Impulse buying'

Buying items online can be seen as convenient as in the virtual world, transactions are only a couple of clicks away from completion. How the ease of conducting transaction impacts on gamers' decisions to purchase virtual items was therefore explored. Despite the ease of purchasing online, gamers were more guarded with spending because purchases were seen as a luxury and gamers were more cautious in an online environment where spending is potentially easier.

Extract 33: *"In an environment where impulse buying is very easy and quick I tend to be more guarded with what I buy"* (Participant 6)

Because of this, recommendations from friends were of major importance in purchase decisions. This supports the findings of Safferling and Lowen (2011) who found researching items before buying was commonplace, and the more researched an item was, the better price it got from the buyer. This also supports the findings of Huang (2012) who highlighted the role of communication with friends in the online world as a contributing factor to subsequent purchasing behaviour.

Extract 34: *"I asked him the best ways on getting an edge and trying to get this ship. I knew the answer would be to 'coin', for the repairs"* (Participant 1)

Extract 35: *"If I see something nice I ask them where they got it from"* (Participant 5)

Being able to research items is essential before making purchases of virtual assets. Related to this is the ability to preview items virtually (similar to a real-world changing room where the gamer can preview an item on their avatar). The availability of previewing meant that gamers were not impulsively buying their items – they were 'experiencing' the item before conducting a transaction.

Extract 36: *"You can preview how it would look on your character. For the items on Guild Wars that's all I really need, all the research I need"* (Participant 2)

Although Participant 2 did not rely heavily on recommendations from friends, he did prefer researching items. This came in the form of 'previewing' them in a virtual dressing room. It could be that virtual assets can be heavily researched, requiring recommendations and being more guarded in an online environment a result of the unique nature of virtual transactions. Communication with friends was found to be of importance in the present study supporting the findings by Huang (2012). However, recommendations alone may not be motivation enough, and previewing items may also be significant as highlighted by Extract 36.

IV. General Discussion

The present study explored psychological aspects of purchasing virtual items and assets. The use of Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) allowed each gamer to share their unique experience of playing and purchase behaviour. Despite the negative aspects of online gaming, the gamers in the present research emphasised a more positive side to buying virtual items and gaming more generally. As highlighted in the analysis, each gamer

experienced their playing behaviour subjectively and such things as motivation for purchase behaviour and psychological impact of buying items hold different meanings for each individual.

The study highlighted many different motivations for purchasing virtual items. Lehdonvirta, Wilska and Johnson (2009) found item exclusivity contributed to an item's importance in-game. This was supported by the findings in the present study in that gamers were more likely to spend money if an item expired. Another key motivation for purchase behaviour is the appeal to social status. Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) found that items take on social roles. The 'social shopping' theory applies to the present findings as throughout the interviews there was the feeling of needing to impress other gamers. Attainment of items demonstrates to others how powerful the gamer is. It might be – in line with Li (2012) – that social motivations are integral for purchasing virtual items. Item function was also of importance in the present study.

Naturally, if an item has benefits for the avatar it is more likely that the gamer will spend money to obtain it (Lehdonvirta 2009). Function linked to progression, purchasing items, and buying in-game currency are all sometimes a necessity to progress. Novelty and collectability were also important motivators for some of the gamers. Combining the findings of the current study and previous research demonstrates that there is a wide range of motivations and each individual will place different levels of importance on certain factors such as exclusivity, function, or social status. Despite subjective motivations, purchasing virtual items arose out of gaming as a predominant pastime. All of the gamers in the sample were dedicated gamers who spent relatively large amounts of time online and as perhaps expected larger gaming commitment to led to purchase behaviour (Kaburuan et al. 2009).

An integral part of multiplayer gaming is the interaction with other gamers. The feeling of 'social presence' in an online environment is reliant on an emotional response to social interaction (Witmer & Singer 1998), and the gamers in the present sample felt social satisfaction. The game sometimes enabled social interaction that might not otherwise be present. This supports the theory suggested by Tay (2005) that gaming enables the building of new friendships. Virtual assets can play a number of roles in facilitating friendships such as enabling the gamer to make their character unique. Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) also pointed out that the shopping environment is more enjoyable online as it removes embarrassment and rude staff. The real social benefits of purchase behaviour should not be underestimated. The virtual world can remove normal social taboos and potentially acts as a social buffer between gamers.

Previous research by Bowman et al. (2012) has shown how emotional attachment to games affects behaviour. This also applies to the present study. Similar to the findings by Bowman et al. (2012), the present study highlighted the role of emotional attachment to an avatar as a predictor for purchase intention. As well as emotional attachment increasing likelihood of spending, the spending of real money on items increases the attachment felt. It could be that purchasing virtual items may be a cyclical behaviour. It is also the case that purchasing affects the cognitions and emotions of gamers – 'pride' was a feeling that resonated in the present study. Emotional attachment to items and characters may be commonplace among gamers. Future research should further investigate feelings of emotional attachment in a virtual world.

Virtual worlds offer gamers the chance to feel psychological reward and elevated self-esteem. Eyal's 'Model of Desire' (2012) can be applied to the present research as many of the interviewees spoke of feelings of superiority. The 'reward' element of the 'Model of Desire' is that the gamer is rewarded for spending as they become more powerful with better

items. The feeling of superiority over other gamers enhances self-esteem. The present study also demonstrated notions of the 'ideal self' and self-torment. 'Wishful identification' (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005) leads to gamers portraying their 'ideal self' through an avatar and a wide range of powerful items can lead to greater self-efficacy and satisfaction (Kim et al. 2012). Therefore it could be argued that gaming and virtual asset purchasing has real psychological benefits for gamers and as suggested by Hussain and Griffiths (2008), simulated environments may be an opportunity for people to explore their personality and test boundaries.

The acquisition of virtual assets enables more detailed role-playing and self-expression. Self-expression has been shown to occur online through avatars (Kim et al. 2012) and buying items has the potential to further customise a character. Self-expression can be related to feelings of psychological reward as gamers are able to portray their selves in a manner that they may not be able to in real life (Hussain & Griffiths 2008). It may also be possible to apply 'Wishful Identification' to self-expression. Kim et al. (2012) highlighted that it was necessary for gamers to identify with their avatar and this has potential to contribute to greater self-efficacy. Virtual assets potentially allow the gamer to explore their creative side through their avatar. The fact that gamers may consider their avatar as personal is indicative of the psychological impact games and virtual transactions can have.

Financial transactions can be easier to conduct in an online environment and the present study took this in to consideration. Supportive of Safferling and Lowen's (2011) findings, the present study highlights how gamers research items before purchasing them. It might be expected that easy-to-use transaction machinery might facilitate spending. However, in reality, gamers were guarded with their spending online and recommendations from friends played a major role in purchase behaviour. This is supported by Huang (2012) who found communication with friends was a predictor for purchasing behaviour. Recommendations alone may not be enough of a predictor and previewing how items look on an avatar was also of importance. Virtual assets can be then researched and the placing of real monetary value on the virtual items indicates the value they may hold to the gamer.

Limitations and future research

The present study is not without limitations. The sample was small (although perfectly adequate for IPA). The sample was also self-selecting and the gamers that participated are unlikely to be representative of all gamers that make in-game purchases. The data were all self-report and are therefore subject to various biases (social desirability biases, recall biases, etc.). Replication using larger samples and other methodologies are therefore needed.

Despite the limitations, the present study was an exploratory study into a relatively new research area. Although video gaming in itself has been studied in depth, transactions for virtual assets have arisen from technological advancement. The present study focussed on the psychological motivations and impact of transactions for virtual items, and future research could study more one or two of the themes analysed in the present paper in more depth. This would develop a greater understanding of the research area and contribute to understanding the underlying psychology and motivation behind gaming and asset purchasing. With a more specific research question in mind future studies may want to employ a different analytical approach. IPA was chosen in order to gain an understanding of the subjective experiences of gamers 'lived experience'. Future studies may want to employ different analytical methodology in order to establish a wider understanding of virtual transactions in gaming. A large proportion of online gamers are younger than eighteen

years old and are less financially independent. Problematic spending may be more prevalent in a younger cohort. Future research should take this in to account.

Implications

The findings of the present study have implications both for game developers and gamers. Game developers looking to incorporate transaction machinery into their games must consider things from the gamer's perspective as too much focus on purchasing items may affect the gaming experience. For gamers, appealing to social status and wanting to gain rewards, 'flow' can be applied to item purchasing (Witmer & Singer 1998, Csikszentmihalyi 1992). The feeling of immersion in-game may stimulate purchase behaviour. Despite the emphasis on the 'positive' in the present study gamers must be aware that feelings of immersion could potentially lead to problem behaviour such as addiction or excessive spending on virtual items (Pontes & Griffiths, 2014).

In the present study, characteristics of the items themselves such as exclusivity and function influenced spending.. The fact that gamers develop emotional attachment to avatars and may use these as self-expression is also something games developers should consider. Whether placing more emphasis on the 'game experience' or generating a profit should affect how item transactions are used in-game. Game developers should also consider that black markets for items exist already (Garrelts 2009) and that introducing an official transaction system could improve the game experience. One certainty is that transactions for virtual assets are becoming integral to online gaming.

Conclusion: The present study aimed to explore the phenomenon of buying virtual items. Motivations for purchase behaviour, the social and psychological benefits of purchase behaviour, emotional attachment to an avatar and items, self-expression through the character, how the transaction machinery impacts on the game experience, and how research contributes to purchase behaviour have all been considered in this study. Unlike media coverage focussing on the more negative impact of online gaming, the present study highlighted the positive aspects of purchasing virtual assets for the gamer. They are able to feel connected socially, feel confidence in themselves and their success, express their inner and ideal self without constraint or fear, build lasting relationships, impress people, and generally benefit from gaming and buying virtual items.

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Blokify: Juego de modelado e impresión 3D en tableta digital para el aprendizaje de vistas normalizadas y perspectiva

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Resumen

En este artículo se analiza el uso del juego Blokify para introducir al alumnado en las competencias que relacionan las figuras tridimensionales con su representación bidimensional mediante las vistas normalizadas y la perspectiva. Estos contenidos se estudian en asignaturas de dibujo a partir de secundaria y Bachillerato.

Blokify es un juego gratuito para tabletas digitales que permite modelar figuras tridimensionales de forma similar al popular video juego Minecraft: "bloque a bloque". Las figuras modeladas con Blokify se pueden imprimir en 3D de manera casi directa. Existen informes internacionales que valoran la potencialidad de los videojuegos como recurso educativo y las Tablet as Digitales y la Impresión 3D como tecnologías con repercusión en la enseñanza.

En este artículo se detalla la experiencia realizada en el curso 2013-2014 con grupos de Educación Primaria (3º y 5º) y un grupo de 4º ESO. La actividad se llevó a cabo en el centro concertado Colegio Nuryana de San Cristóbal de La Laguna y participaron un total de 70 alumnos. La experiencia llevada a cabo con alumnos de primaria permite ver que con estas nuevas estrategias de aprendizaje, contenidos del curriculum de secundaria, podría empezar a estudiarse en cursos de primaria.

Palabras clave

Aplicaciones, tabletas digitales, Impresión 3D, modelado 3D, educación, juegos, Vistas normalizadas.

Blokify: Game for 3D modeling and printing for digital tablet to learn standard views and perspective

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Abstract

In this article we analyze the use of the game Blokify to introduce students to the competencies that relates three-dimensional figures with their bidimensional representation by the standard views and perspective. These contents are studied in technical drawing from secondary and high schools.

Blokify is a free game for digital tablets that allows modeling tridimensional figures similar to the popular video game Minecraft "block to block". Figures modeled with Blokify can be printed in 3D almost directly. There are international reports who value the potential of videogames as an educational resource and Digital Tablets and 3D printing impact technologies in teaching.

In this article we describe the experience made in the course of 2013-2014 with groups of primary school (3rd and 5th) and a group of 4th ESO. The event took place at the concerted center Nuryana of San Cristóbal of La Laguna and involved a total of 70 students. The experiment conducted with elementary students demonstrates that with these new learning strategies, content of secondary curriculum could begin studied in primary grades.

Keywords

Applications, digital tablets, 3D Printing, 3D modeling, education, games, standardized Views.

I. Introducción

Existen diferentes informes internacionales sobre la educación en el siglo XXI (UNESCO, 2015; Institute of international education, 2014; OECD, 2014). Entre dichos informes existe uno específico sobre tecnologías en educación que se ha convertido en un referente: el "Informe Horizon". Dicho informe está elaborado desde 2004 por la New Media Consortium´s (<http://www.nmc.org/>) e identifica seis nuevos tipos de tecnologías que podrán ser de uso generalizado en la educación, analizando el impacto que se prevé en la enseñanza, el aprendizaje, la investigación y la expresión creativa. Desde el año 2009, se realizan dos informes, uno para enseñanza preuniversitaria (K-12) y otro para enseñanza universitaria. En 2014, se incorpora la realización de un tercer informe específico para la enseñanza preuniversitaria en Europa.

Desde 2010, se incluye en los distintos Informes Horizon, una corriente de aprendizaje basado en juegos. Dicha corriente de aprendizaje, en los últimos años se ha denominado con diferentes términos como por ejemplo ludificación, game based learning (GBL), gamificación, etc. (Lee, Hammer, 2011; Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, Nacke, 2011; Kapp 2012). En los informes Horizon en los últimos dos años ha terminado por designarse como Gamificación. Esta tendencia educativa trata de potenciar la motivación, la concentración, el esfuerzo y otros valores comunes a todos los juegos para influir y motivar a los alumnos. Estas estrategias basadas en juegos responden a una realidad en la que los niños con 2 y 3 años de edad comienzan a utilizar los dispositivos móviles como tabletas y smartphones de sus padres para entretenerse con los juegos. El 52,5% de los menores de 11 a 14 años de edad juega habitualmente con sus dispositivos móviles y el 35,5% lo hace en alguna ocasión (Cánovas, García de Pablo, Oliaga San Atilano, & Aboy Ferrer, 2014).

Por otra parte, en 2013, el Informe Horizon (Horizon, 2013) indica que las tabletas digitales y las impresoras 3D son tecnologías que tendrán impacto en la educación en los próximos cinco años. Además, el Informe Horizon 2014 (Horizon, 2014) incorpora una tendencia significativa denominada "BYOD" (Bring Your Own Device), que consiste en permitir o promocionar que los estudiantes utilicen en el aula sus propios dispositivos (smatphones, tabletas digitales o ultrabooks), que junto con la cantidad de aplicaciones educativas gratuitas disponibles, hace que esta sea una alternativa viable para la digitalización del aula.

Las tabletas digitales y dispositivos móviles son usados por el 30% de los niños españoles de 10 años de edad. A los 12 años, casi el 70% dispone ya de este tipo de tecnología, y a los 14 años el 83% (Cánovas, García de Pablo, Oliaga San Atilano, & Aboy Ferrer, 2014). Uno de los estudios más extensos sobre tabletas "The iPad as a tool for education: a case study" (Heinrich, 2012) demuestra el impacto significativo y muy positivo en la enseñanza y en el aprendizaje de los alumnos. Las tabletas digitales, debido a su portabilidad y su autonomía, permiten convertir cualquier aula en un espacio digital, eliminando la problemática asociada a las aulas de ordenadores.

Las impresoras 3D, son máquinas que, a partir de ficheros digitales, permiten generar objetos mediante adición de material utilizando para ello diferentes tecnologías (plástico fundido, resina fotosensible, etc.). A esta tecnología se la conoce también como prototipado rápido (Canessa, Fonda, & Zennaro, 2013). El abaratamiento de esta tecnología en los últimos años permite pensar en su uso para contextos educativos.

Uno de los contenidos curriculares de educación secundaria se centra en la relación entre las figuras tridimensionales y su representación bidimensional mediante las vistas normalizadas y la perspectiva. Este contenido suele representar una dificultad importante para los alumnos porque necesita un alto grado de abstracción. Debido a esto, se pretende utilizar un juego como Blokify para mejorar su aprendizaje. Por otro lado, y puesto que es un juego muy sencillo e intuitivo, se decide comprobar si los alumnos de educación primaria serían capaces de realizar los mismos ejercicios que estaban pensados para secundaria.

II. Antecedentes

a. Videojuegos en educación

El uso de los videojuegos con fines educativos lleva investigándose desde hace tres décadas. En 1978, G. Ball publicó el artículo "Telegames Teach More Than You Think" (Ball, 1978) en el que estableció cuatro áreas para la evaluación de los videojuegos como medios didácticos: el desarrollo instructivo de los videojuegos, el desarrollo de habilidades por parte de los videojuegos, el diseño de los videojuegos y su capacidad de adaptabilidad y flexibilidad. Uno de los estudios sobre el potencial instructivo de los juegos, realizado por B. Lowery y F. Knirk (Lowery & Knirk, 1982-83), más concretamente sobre los videojuegos, destaca la mejora en habilidades espaciales y el beneficio de la simulación tridimensional, aspecto también fundamental de la visualización espacial. En España, en la Universidad de la Laguna, existe una experiencia que utiliza el videojuego Tetris como herramienta educativa para la mejora de la visión espacial (Saorín, Martín Gutiérrez, Martín Dorta, & Contero, 2009).

En 1984 S. Long y W. Long (Long & W.H. Long, 1984) defiende los principios del aprendizaje motivador que subyacen en los videojuegos: el desafío, la fantasía y la curiosidad. Poco después, S. Silvern (Silvern, 1985-86) publicó un artículo titulado "Classroom Use of Video Games" en el que, de igual modo, defendió todo aquello que los videojuegos pueden ofrecer en términos de experiencias educativas útiles.

En 1998 se publica el libro "Jugando con Videojuegos: educación y entretenimiento" (Gros, B, 1998), acerca de la experiencia en la utilización de videojuegos en el aula. La publicación de 2004 "Pantallas, juegos y educación: la alfabetización digital en la escuela" (Gros, B, 2004), es la construcción de bases sólidas para la integración de las TIC (tecnologías de la información y la comunicación) en la educación. En 2011, el Instituto de Tecnologías Educativas del Departamento de Proyectos Europeos, publica el proyecto "Imagine: Juegos digitales para el aprendizaje" (Educativas, 2011). Su objetivo es aumentar la experimentación del aprendizaje basado en juegos y la integración de éste en las enseñanzas generales del sistema educativo.

Un videojuego con el mismo funcionamiento que Blockify es Minecraft, que permite construir en 3D con bloques, en un entorno de juego donde los participantes disponen de una gran libertad de elección y exploración. (Gértrudix Barrio & Gértrudix Barrio, 2013). Es un videojuego con más de 54 millones de unidades vendidas (Castrillón, 2014). Existe una versión específica para educación (www.minecraftedu.com). Minecraft ha sido evaluado como recurso didáctico en distintos campos, como por ejemplo los relativos a edificios históricos, el fomento de la creatividad o el interés por el descubrimiento (Sáez López & Domínguez Garrido, 2014) entre otros.

En septiembre de 2012, Mojang comenzó el proyecto solidario "Block by Block" (www.blockbyblock.org) en cooperación con la ONU para crear y diseñar entornos del mundo real en Minecraft. El proyecto permite a los jóvenes que viven en zonas deprimidas, diseñar con Minecraft los cambios que les gustaría ver y a participar en su planificación urbana, modificando su propio vecindario. Este videojuego tiene posibilidad de imprimir sus diseños y construcciones en una impresora 3D.

b. Modelado 3D en educación

El modelado y la impresión 3D hasta hace aproximadamente ocho años eran tecnologías reservadas para expertos en la materia y requerían un largo y costoso aprendizaje, además se precisaba un equipo técnico avanzado y el precio de los programas era muy elevado y sólo accesible para grandes centros, empresas o universidades (Caño, de la Cruz, & Solano, 2007). Este panorama cambia en 2006, con la distribución de forma gratuita del programa SketchUp por parte de Google. Sketchup es un programa multiplataforma (PC y Mac) con una versión gratuita, que nos ofrece la posibilidad de introducirnos en el Modelado 3D con pocos conocimientos y en muy poco tiempo. Dispone de una interfaz amigable, con un reducido número de órdenes intuitivas que permite un rápido aprendizaje. Debido a estas características, este programa se ha utilizado en entornos educativos en materias relacionadas con el dibujo y para la mejora de la visión espacial (de la Torre Cantero J., Saorín, Carbonell, Del Castillo Cossío, & Contero, 2012).

Otras empresas que desarrollan software de modelado tridimensional están empezando a desarrollar programas con esta nueva manera de entender el modelado 3D, accesible al gran público y no exclusivamente para expertos. Un significativo ejemplo, es la suite 123D desarrollada por Autodesk. Esta suite es un conjunto de cinco aplicaciones gratuitas, multidispositivo, multiplataforma y muy sencillas de aprender a utilizar. Cada una de ellas sirve para un tipo de modelado 3D específico, por un lado más geométrico como 123D Design o más orgánico como 123D Creature. Además, todas las aplicaciones cuentan con la posibilidad de imprimir los diseños en una impresora 3D y todas tienen una versión desarrollada para tabletas digitales.

c. Tablet as digitales

Las primeras tabletas digitales surgieron en el año 93, llamadas Apple Message Pad, más conocido como Newton. El modelo nunca llegó a tener éxito, pero sin embargo el desarrollo del software se utilizó por la industria de la electrónica para crear un nuevo aparato electrónico denominado Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). En el año 2001 Microsoft presenta diversos prototipos de Tablet's Pc, pero el funcionamiento y la experiencia de uso de estos dispositivos no logró convencer a la mayoría de los usuarios. Sin embargo, esta iniciativa de Microsoft popularizó el término Tablet PC y sentó las bases de la corriente actual de tabletas digitales. La empresa Apple lanzó en 2010 la primera tableta digital realmente operativa, el iPad, que aprovechaba la experiencia de la empresa con los dispositivos móviles táctiles que ya tenía en el mercado (el iPhone, el iPod Touch). Desde su aparición, las tabletas digitales, debido a su pantalla táctil, han sido utilizadas como dispositivo para dibujar (Saorín Pérez, de la Torre Cantero, Martín Dorta, Carbonell Carrera, & Contero González, 2011).

d. Impresoras 3D y educación

Respecto a la tecnología de la impresión 3D, se empezó a utilizar en los años setenta y desde su aparición las universidades han tratado de utilizarlas como complemento a su docencia. Desde hace años, el prototipado rápido es un tema habitual en los cursos y en los libros de expresión gráfica dirigidos a estudiantes universitarios. Pero uno de los grandes factores que limitó el uso de esta tecnología en las aulas era el precio. En el año 2000 una máquina de prototipado rápido tenía un precio que oscilaba entre 10.000 y 100.000 dólares por lo que sólo los grandes centros podían permitirse el lujo de tener una (Viki, y otros, s.f.).

Sin embargo, en el año 2005 se crea el proyecto RepRap con el objetivo de abaratar los costes asociados a la impresión 3D. Esta iniciativa dio lugar a la popularización de dichas máquinas, ya que los costes asociados a fabricar una de ellas eran del orden de los 1000 dólares. Uno de los fundadores del proyecto RepRap, Zach Smith, fundó en 2009 la empresa MakerBot cuyo objetivo era vender kits de impresoras 3D para que todo el mundo pudiera montarse su propia impresora por menos de 1000 dólares. A partir de ese momento, las impresoras de bajo coste se han popularizado y ha surgido una industria alrededor de ellas. La aparición de esta nueva gama de impresoras permite a la mayoría de los centros educativos disponer de una de ellas y utilizarla en su docencia. Por lo tanto, una vez superado la barrera del precio, es necesario disponer de metodologías y recursos docentes que nos permitan sacar partido de las impresoras 3D en entornos educativos (Canessa, Fonda & Zennaro, 2013).

III. Blokify y su relación con las visitas normalizadas

Blokify es un juego, gratuito, disponible para tabletas iPad que permite construir figuras mediante el uso de bloques en forma de cubos. Es un juego de tipo sandbox (es decir que no hay que cumplir ningún objetivo y que el jugador puede crear con libertad), de interfaz muy sencilla e intuitiva, muy parecido a Minecraft. Dispone únicamente de dos funciones de construcción, una es colocar bloques y la otra eliminarlos. La interfaz del juego es tipo tablero de ajedrez y cuenta con un entorno adaptado para los niños. Prácticamente no es necesario un aprendizaje, dado que solo se necesitan las instrucciones básicas de cómo rotar el espacio y moverse en el entorno de modelado tridimensional (Figura 1). Además la aplicación cuenta con la posibilidad de imprimir en 3D los modelos diseñados.



Figura 1: interfaz de la aplicación Blokify

Blokify ayuda a entender de manera directa y lúdica la relación entre los modelos tridimensionales y su representación bidimensional mediante vistas normalizadas y perspectivas. Además, debido a que su manera de diseñar es muy parecida a la del videojuego minecraft, muy popular entre niños y jóvenes, permite disminuir al máximo la necesidad de formación para la utilización del mismo.

La enseñanza de las vistas normalizadas (planta, alzado y perfil) forma parte del curriculum de secundaria en la asignatura Educación Plástica y Visual y en Tecnología, siendo una parte importante de la asignatura de Dibujo Técnico que se estudia en Bachillerato. Para el estudio de las vistas normalizadas y los objetos en perspectiva, tradicionalmente, se realizan ejercicios sobre papel (Figura 2) que incluye dibujos en los que los alumnos deben identificar las figuras y saber obtener las vistas normalizadas. O al revés, representar la perspectiva a partir de las tres vistas. La interpretación de los gráficos es compleja y requiere conocimientos específicos y habilidades espaciales (M.Diezmann & Lowrie, 2009).

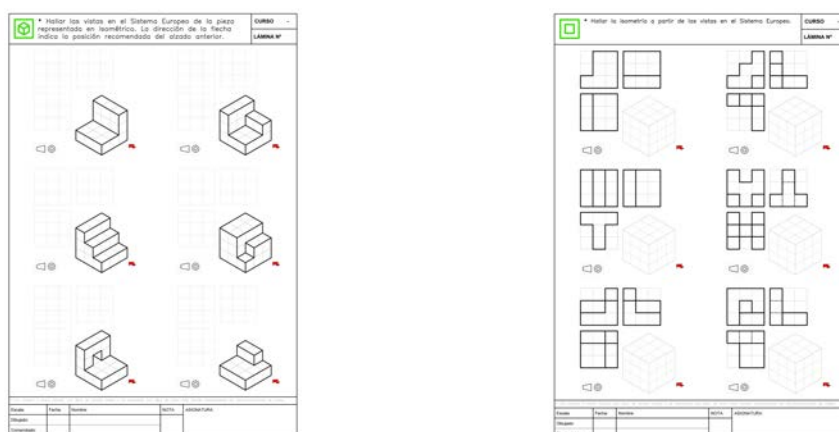


Figura 2: Ejercicios tradicionales de Perspectivas y vistas normalizadas

El desarrollo de las habilidades espaciales es un objetivo presente en los currículos a partir de la educación secundaria. Incluye las relaciones espaciales y la percepción, visión y rotación espacial (Sjölinder, s.f.). En la educación primaria estos objetivos están relacionados con el espacio físico que rodea al niño (Holloway, 1982).

Está demostrado que las habilidades espaciales se desarrollan mediante entrenamiento (de la Torre Cantero J., Saorín, Carbonell, Del Castillo Cossío, & Contero, 2012), y se relaciona el dominio de las vistas normalizadas con la elección de carreras más técnicas (Wai, Lubinski, & Benbo, 2009). Estas carreras, agrupadas bajo las siglas STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), que hace referencia a los estudios de ciencia, tecnología, ingeniería y matemáticas. En 2011, los organismos estadounidenses del United States National Research Council y la National Science Foundation, consideraron a las disciplinas STEM como fundamentales para las sociedades tecnológicamente avanzadas e importantes para el desarrollo económico futuro (Brown, DeVillez, & Luczak, 2013). En Europa, la red educativa European Schoolnet (que agrupa a 31 Ministerios de Educación europeos) dispone en su portal web de tres áreas principales de interés: Innovación Educativa, Seguridad en la Red y estudios STEM. En este portal, se resalta que las habilidades en ciencia, tecnología, ingeniería y matemáticas (STEM) se están convirtiendo en una parte cada vez más

importante de la alfabetización básica en la economía del conocimiento (<http://www.eun.org/focus-areas/stem>).

IV. Descripción de la propuesta educativa

Para la realización de la actividad, se utilizan ejercicios impresos con la representación de formas 3D y de vistas normalizadas. Los ejercicios forman parte de un taller de modelado 3D disponible en el portal Anfore 3D (www.anfore3d.com) que ha sido validado en diversos estudios y niveles educativos (De La Torre Cantero, 2013). Dadas las características para construir modelos 3D de Blokify, las figuras elegidas como enunciado se pueden construir por apilado de cubos. La tarea que se les propondrá a los alumnos es que realicen el mayor número de piezas posibles en el tiempo de una clase lectiva. Se realizan primero figuras con Blokify de los ejercicios a partir de la perspectiva y después a partir de las vistas normalizadas (Figura 3).

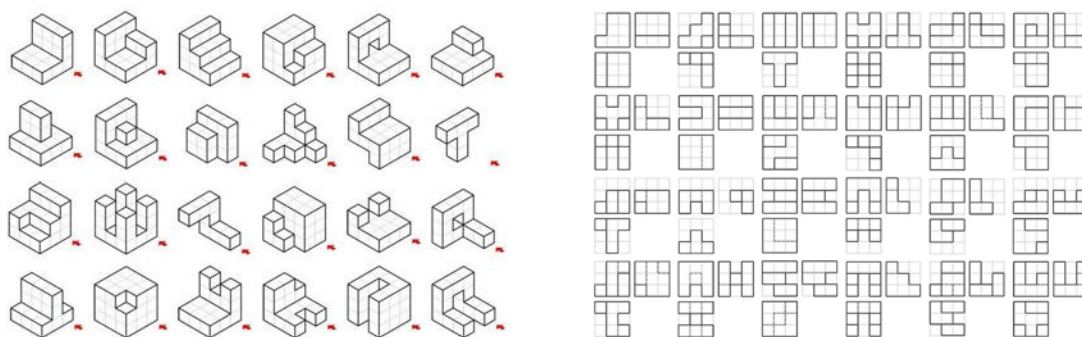


Figura 3: Ejercicios de Perspectivas y vistas normalizadas

Todas las creaciones que se realicen con la aplicación Blokify se podrán imprimir con una impresora 3D (Figura 4), posibilitando así a los alumnos entender la relación entre los objetos 3D y su representación bidimensional. Usando las diferentes maneras de ver o percibir el objeto, se contribuye a la mejora de la visión espacial de los niños (Holloway, 1982).

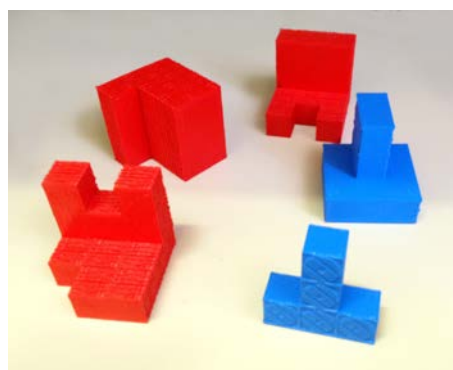
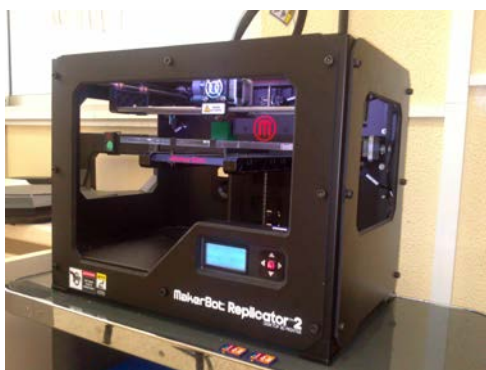


Figura 4: Figuras impresas con una impresora 3D

Por lo tanto, con esta actividad los alumnos juegan con las mismas piezas pero en 4 formatos diferentes (Figura 5).

1. Dibujada sobre papel, interpretando la tridimensionalidad del objeto.
2. Dibujado sobre papel las 3 vistas de un objeto.
3. Modelado en un programa 3D con construcción a base de bloques y posibilidad de rotar el objeto en el espacio.
4. Impresión 3D del objeto diseñado. Teniendo la posibilidad de tocar un objeto físico.

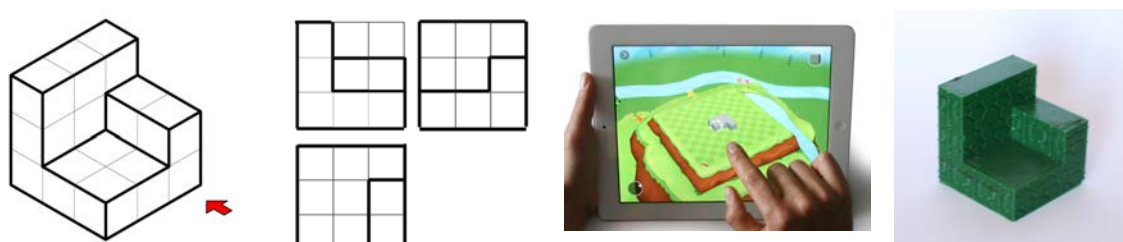


Figura 5: Diferentes formatos del mismo ejercicio

V. Descripción de la experiencia educativa

La actividad se realizó en el Colegio Nuryana de San Cristóbal de La Laguna el día 22 de abril de 2014. Se trata de un centro concertado cuya oferta educativa va desde educación infantil hasta 2º de Bachillerato. En la actividad participaron un total de 70 alumnos en tres sesiones distintas con un grupo de 4º ESO y dos grupos de Educación Primaria (3º y 5º). 28 alumnos de 3º de primaria (8-9 años), 26 alumnos de 5º de primaria (10-11 años) y 16 alumnos de 4º de la ESO (15-16 años).

Antes de comenzar la actividad, se realizó una breve encuesta a los alumnos para determinar el uso de dispositivos digitales durante su vida cotidiana, con la idea de ver si los alumnos estaban familiarizados con los medios digitales (Tabla 1). En dicha tabla se puede observar como la mayoría de los estudiantes dispone de ordenadores en un porcentaje cercano al 100% independientemente del nivel educativo. Sin embargo el uso de tabletas aumenta en los niveles inferiores, al igual que ocurre con el hecho de que conozcan el videojuego Minecraft.

CURSO	4º ESO	5º Primaria	3º Primaria
Total de alumnos	16	26	28
Número de alumnos que tiene tabletas digitales en su hogar	9 (56 %)	24 (92 %)	26 (92 %)
Número estudiantes con ordenador portátil en casa	15 (93 %)	25 (96 %)	26 (92 %)
Número de alumnos con ordenador de mesa	16 (100 %)	25 (96 %)	28 (100 %)
Número de alumnos que habían jugado al videojuego Minecraft	4 (25 %)	11 (42 %)	18 (64 %)

Tabla 1: Caracterización de los participantes

La actividad se desarrolló durante tres sesiones de 50 minutos cada una. Se trabajó en grupos de 2 ó 3 alumnos, a cada grupo se le entregó una tableta y dos hojas con ejercicios de perspectivas y vistas normalizadas (Figura 6). La actividad consistía en construir primero 10 piezas dibujadas en perspectiva con la aplicación Blokify.



Figura 6: Alumnos realizando el ejercicio e impresora 3D

Una vez los grupos conseguían construir las 10 piezas con blokify a partir de una perspectiva dibujada, pasaban al siguiente nivel, en el cual se aumentaba el grado de dificultad pues los alumnos debían realizar las piezas teniendo como datos tres vistas de la figura (Alzado, Planta y Perfil Izquierdo).

A medida los alumnos iban obteniendo piezas, una de las posibilidades que ofrece Blokify es la de generar el archivo “.stl” para poder imprimir los modelos en una impresora 3D. Durante el taller, los tres primeros grupos en terminar una de las piezas tenían la posibilidad de generar el modelo en plástico en una impresora 3D (esta limitación es debida a que cada pieza tarda alrededor de 15 minutos en imprimirse). Al finalizar la experiencia se les pasó a los participantes una encuesta de satisfacción sobre la misma (Tabla 2). Para analizar la consistencia del cuestionario se ha realizado un alfa de Cronbach.

Pregunta

1	Blokify es una aplicación sencilla de utilizar.
2	¿Piensas que es más sencillo realizar las figuras en Blokify que en el papel?
3	La actividad contribuye a mejorar la visión espacial.
4	¿Crees que es acertada la orientación educativa de la aplicación Blokify?
5	La incorporación de tabletas al aula es estimulante para los alumnos.
6	Me gustaría que se incorporaran más actividades de este estilo al temario de la asignatura.
7	Ha sido sencillo realizar la actividad siguiendo las instrucciones recibidas.
8	Prefiero trabajar con tabletas que hacerlo usando reglas, lápiz y papel.
9	El uso de impresoras 3D en el aula, incrementa la motivación de los alumnos debido a la posibilidad de ver su proyecto terminado.
10	Usar una impresora 3D es fácil y viable en un aula.

Tabla 2: Resultados encuesta de satisfacción

VI. Resultados

Después de la experiencia se contabilizó el número de ejercicios resueltos, diferenciando los tres niveles en los que se hizo la prueba. Los resultados se pueden ver en la Figura 7.

Los alumnos de 4º ESO fueron capaces de completar todos los ejercicios a partir de la perspectiva, y la mayoría consiguió resolver más de cinco piezas a partir de las vistas normalizadas. Estos alumnos llevan dos años en la asignatura de Dibujo Técnico y ya tienen los conocimientos básicos sobre las perspectivas y las vistas normalizadas.

Los alumnos de 5º de Primaria desconocían el Dibujo Técnico y conceptos como la visión espacial. Por otro lado, la mayoría estaba familiarizada con el videojuego Minecraft y se manejaban con bastante soltura con la tableta digital y la aplicación Blokify. Fueron capaces de terminar al 90% los ejercicios a partir de la perspectiva y también realizaron al menos dos piezas del siguiente nivel.

Finalmente, los alumnos de 3º de Primaria obtuvieron resultados un poco inferiores respecto del grupo anterior. Del total de nueve grupos, tres consiguieron realizar al menos una pieza a partir de las tres vistas.

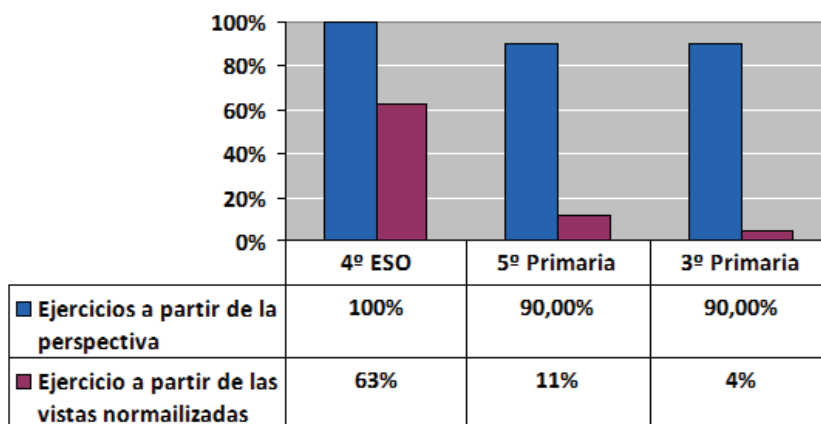


Figura 7: Resultados por niveles educativos

VII. Evaluación de satisfacción de la actividad

Un aspecto fundamental que valoramos con esta actividad es la opinión de los participantes. Por ello, en los últimos minutos de cada sesión se pasó un breve cuestionario de diez preguntas a los alumnos para medir la utilidad del ejercicio y su opinión respecto a la eficacia del mismo utilizando la escala Likert del 1 al 5. La tabla de frecuencias de los resultados de los cuestionarios se puede ver en la tabla 3.

Nº Pregunta	Número de respuestas en escala de Likert (N= 70 alumnos)				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	0	7	13	50
2	1	4	5	14	46
3	3	1	12	20	34
4	2	2	8	18	40
5	2	4	7	7	50
6	1	0	3	3	63
7	0	2	3	15	50
8	2	2	3	4	59
9	1	4	7	9	49
10	0	6	15	23	26

Tabla 3: Tabla de Frecuencias para el cuestionario de satisfacción

Para dichos resultados se ha obtenido un alfa de Cronbach de 0,721(en particular para los 16 alumnos de 4º de la ESO un alfa de Cronbach de 0,770). Los resultados de los cuestionarios muestran que el 90% de las preguntas tuvieron una puntuación superior al 4,00 sobre 5,00 (tabla 4).

Pregunta (Escala Likert 1 a 5)		
1	Blokify es una aplicación sencilla de utilizar.	4.56
2	¿Piensas que es más sencillo realizar las figuras en Blokify que en el papel?	4.47
3	La actividad contribuye a mejorar la visión espacial.	4.06
4	¿Crees que es acertada la orientación educativa de la aplicación Blokify?	4.25
5	La incorporación de tabletas al aula es estimulante para los alumnos.	4.37
6	Me gustaría que se incorporaran más actividades de este estilo al temario de la asignatura.	4.79
7	Ha sido sencillo realizar la actividad siguiendo las instrucciones recibidas.	4.64
8	Prefiero trabajar con tabletas que hacerlo usando reglas, lápiz y papel.	4.57
9	El uso de impresoras 3D en el aula, incrementa la motivación de los	4.39

alumnos debido a la posibilidad de ver su proyecto terminado.	
10	Usar una impresora 3D es fácil y viable en un aula. 3.87

Tabla 4: Resultados encuesta de satisfacción

VIII. Conclusiones

Debido a que Blokify es un juego para tabletas digitales, permite introducir el modelado 3D digital en cualquier aula. Blokify es apto para la iniciación al modelado tridimensional desde la enseñanza primaria, dado que permite a los niños familiarizarse con el trabajo en un entorno 3D con medios digitales, sin requerir un aprendizaje ni conocimientos previos de programas de modelado.

Blokify es un recurso que ayuda a entender las vistas normalizadas (planta, alzado y perfil) de un objeto geométrico. Este tema es importante para el dibujo técnico y su conocimiento es necesario para estudiar carreras como ingeniería o arquitectura. Comprobamos que sirve para introducir a alumnos en la relación entre las figuras tridimensionales y su representación bidimensional mediante las vistas normalizadas y la perspectiva.

Los alumnos prefieren realizar ejercicios de perspectivas y vistas mediante modelados 3D en tableta digital antes que hacerlos sobre el soporte de papel tradicional (4,57 sobre 5). Y a ellos mismos les parece más fácil realizar estos ejercicios mediante los dispositivos digitales. El 87,4 % de los participantes cree que la utilización de tabletas digitales en el aula aumenta su motivación. A un 95,8% de los alumnos les gustaría tener actividades de este estilo dentro de alguna asignatura. La mayoría de los alumnos, especialmente los de menor edad, estaban habituados a manejar tabletas digitales y no tuvieron ninguna dificultad en trabajar con Blokify, a pesar de ser la primera vez que la usaban.

El uso de impresoras 3D en el aula, incrementa la motivación de los alumnos debido a la posibilidad de ver su proyecto terminado (4,39 sobre 5).

Finalmente, el hecho de que varios grupos de Educación Primaria lograran llegar al nivel más avanzado y resolver algunas figuras sin tener conocimientos previos, puede hacernos reflexionar sobre si tecnologías como las utilizadas en esta experiencia, permiten acelerar los procesos de aprendizaje.

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Videjuegos para la inclusión educativa

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Resumen

En un mundo globalizado e interconectado donde las sociedades están abocadas a cambios continuos y demandan aprendizajes funcionales, activos y eficientes, hoy más que nunca, la educación se configura como un elemento primordial para desarrollar, por un lado, las nociones técnicas e instrumentales de cada una de las áreas del conocimiento y, por otro, las destrezas que capaciten a la persona para desenvolverse en estos escenarios variantes, en los que la comunicación y la socialización son herramientas fundamentales.

No obstante, se debe considerar que un aprendizaje eficaz tiene en cuenta diversos procesos psicológicos como la atención, la memoria, la percepción, la motivación, la emoción, etc.; pero además se apoya en una serie de principios psicopedagógicos y didácticos como la imitación, el interés, la actividad, la significación o el juego. Precisamente, este último instrumento pedagógico es uno de los empleados en las aulas, en todas sus variantes, para la conquista de los diversos aprendizajes dado los atributos subyacentes que posee.

El siguiente artículo presenta en líneas teóricas una de las variantes de este principio didáctico, los videojuegos, reflexionando sobre sus propiedades y los beneficios que comportan en el desarrollo de los procesos de aprendizaje inclusivos, donde se manifiestan los elementos de presencia, participación y progreso.

Palabras clave

inclusión educativa; videojuegos; competencia social y cívica

Videogames for the educative inclusion

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Abstract

In a globalized and interconnected world where societies are close to continuous changes and demanding functional, active and efficient learning. Now more than ever, education is configured as a primary element to develop, on the one hand and instrumental techniques of each of the knowledge areas notions and on the other, the skills that enable a person to function in these scenarios alternatives, where communication and socialization are key tools.

However, taking into consideration that effective learning considers various psychological processes such as attention, memory, perception, motivation, emotion; but also relies on a series of educational psychology and instructional principles as imitation, interest, activity, significance or play. Indeed, the latter is a pedagogical tool in classrooms employees, in all its variants, for the conquest of the various learning as internal attributes it own. The following article presents theoretical lines one alternative of this educational principle, videogames, thinking about their properties and the benefits that involve in developing inclusive learning processes, where the elements of presence, participation and achievement is demonstrated.

Keywords

inclusive education; video games; social and civic competence

I. Introducción

Los seres humanos tienen rasgos comunes, pero a la vez, también poseen características que los diferencian a los unos de los otros, esta circunstancia, se da en todas las sociedades, lo que hace ineludible la atención a la diversidad.

Esta deferencia a la diversidad es necesaria si consideramos la globalización que se ha producido en las sociedades del siglo XXI en la política, la economía, la educación y los aspectos sociales, esta variedad posee un abanico multidisciplinar ya que condiciona aspectos como la cultura, la ideología, la religión, los estilos de vida, los ritmos de aprendizaje, etc.

Abordar las mismas desde la escuela y las aulas ha cobrado una gran relevancia, en las dos últimas décadas, propiciando marcos de referencia para una actuación de calidad que favorezca la incorporación a la sociedad de los individuos de forma eficaz.

La intención de educar en la diversidad implica conocer y reflexionar sobre las diferencias individuales y las necesidades educativas que surgen con las mismas, tomándolas como referencia para la acción didáctica – pedagógica y, modificando de esta forma el contexto escolar y la cultura educativa. Este concepto no es sólo el eje vertebrador de los sistemas educativos vigentes, sino que es uno de los fundamentos de la igualdad de oportunidades que está reconocida en las sociedades democráticas.

Esta cultura educativa se fundamenta en el beneficio que puede suponer la aceptación y aprobación de la diversidad como elemento que genera la inclusión en los individuos.

Cabe esperar que la educación inclusiva contribuya a desarrollar la ansiada cohesión social convirtiéndose en un elemento indispensable para que la sociedad pueda progresar hacia los ideales de paz, libertad y justicia social; un servicio público que beneficie el desarrollo humano en condiciones de igualdad, no constituyéndose en un factor adicional de exclusión (...)(Arnaiz, 2012 p. 41).

Sin embargo, la adscripción a la educación inclusiva como un proceso lógico para convivir en las sociedades actuales precisa de la figura del docente y de sus prácticas pedagógicas, lo cual sugiere buscar alternativas y adaptaciones a su metodología a través de innovaciones y experiencias que favorezcan el desarrollo de la inclusión en su aula; encontramos de esta forma un aliado en cualquier recurso que beneficie esta adquisición de comportamientos, conocimientos y aprendizajes, concretamente el empleo de los videojuegos o juegos digitales se presentan como un elemento ejemplificador para esta acción, dado su carácter lúdico, motivador y atrayente que tiene para el alumnado.

II. Educación y el valor de la inclusión en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje

Actualmente las organizaciones e instituciones educativas están asistiendo a la absoluta e íntegra implementación de los cuatro pilares básicos que sustentan la educación a lo largo de la vida, propuestos hace casi dos décadas por Delors (1996), los mismos señalaban los siguientes principios:

- El aprendizaje y el desarrollo de procesos y habilidades que favorezcan el inicio y el progreso de la adquisición de un conocimiento de carácter generalista o cultural, compuesto y a la par, de las aportaciones de las realidades metodológicas, conceptuales, técnicas, instrumentales y metodológicas de las diversas áreas científicas; en otros términos aprender a conocer y, por tanto aprender a aprender.
- El aprendizaje y la proyección de una serie de destrezas que fomenten la cualificación para desenvolverse de forma óptima y creciente en las situaciones cotidianas, lo que se concretiza en aprender a hacer.
- El desarrollo y el crecimiento de la conciencia de uno mismo y de los otros, considerando la convivencia democrática en sociedad y la cultura de paz, es decir, aprender a vivir o aprender a convivir.
- Y, por último, la conciencia y percepción de uno mismo, de sus capacidades, destrezas y habilidades, desarrollando su personalidad y favoreciendo un incremento de la autonomía y la responsabilidad personal, lo cual coincide con aprender a ser.

Todos estos aspectos han desembocado en las competencias clave, las mismas son definidas por la Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (en adelante OECD) como "Una competencia es más que conocimientos y destrezas. Involucra la habilidad de enfrentar demandas complejas, apoyándose en y movilizándolo recursos psicosociales (incluyendo destrezas y actitudes) en un contexto en particular" (2005, p. 4).

Precisamente este organismo internacional realiza una categorización para la clasificación de las competencias clave que necesita cualquier ciudadano para desenvolverse en las sociedades del siglo XXI, considerando la variabilidad, extensión y complejidad de las mismas, estas son:

- Primero, los individuos deben poder usar un amplio rango de herramientas para interactuar efectivamente con el ambiente: tanto físicas como en la tecnología de la información y socioculturales como en el uso del lenguaje. Necesitan comprender dichas herramientas ampliamente, cómo para adaptarlas a sus propios fines, usar las herramientas de manera interactiva.
- Segundo, en un mundo cada vez más interdependiente, los individuos necesitan poder comunicarse con otros, y debido a que encontrarán personas de diversos orígenes, es importante que puedan interactuar en grupos heterogéneos.
- Tercero, los individuos necesitan poder tomar la responsabilidad de manejar sus propias vidas, situar sus vidas en un contexto social más amplio y actuar de manera autónoma. (OECD, 2005 p. 5).

La segunda categoría de esta tipificación manifiesta la relevancia de desarrollar destrezas y habilidades para interactuar en grupos heterogéneos, en sociedades más globalizadas donde la diversidad es un factor nuclear a considerar, en este sentido Puigdemívol (2007, p. 20) alude tres razones para asumir la diversidad en la escuela:

- Realidad social ineludible. Considerando el proceso de globalización mundial, las actuales sociedades se hacen más complejas con una gran diversidad social, religiosa, ideológica, lingüística y cultural en las que se busca el equilibrio y la convivencia de esta heterogeneidad de aspectos. La escuela, por lo tanto, se

convierte en una institución mediadora de la que se dotan las sociedades para integrar a sus jóvenes.

- Necesidad educativa de primer orden. Los centros educativos se convierten en contextos ideales para la convivencia y, naturalmente, para educar en la diversidad y en la comprensión del otro, fomentando el desarrollo de diversos valores.
- La diversidad como valor educativo. Se debe entender la diversidad como un valor educativo primordial en las sociedades actuales, el cual no se puede desarrollar en contextos de homogeneidad.

A pesar de que hace unas décadas la diversidad en la escuela era considerada como un elemento desfavorable que impedía un desarrollo normalizado de las dinámicas educativas y la misma era afrontada con mecanismos de ordenación diferenciadores y segregados (Parrilla, 2002), diversas organizaciones y administraciones internacionales abogaron por la concienciación de la diversidad como un elemento y valor clave en la educación, dando lugar a la inclusión.

La inclusión es vista como un proceso para abordar y responder a la diversidad de necesidades de todos los alumnos a través de una mayor participación en el aprendizaje, las culturas y las comunidades, y la reducción de la exclusión dentro y desde la educación. Implica cambios y modificaciones en el contenido, enfoques, estructuras y estrategias, con una visión común que abarca a todos los niños de un rango apropiado de edad y la convicción de que es responsabilidad del sistema regular la educar de todos los niños (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, en adelante UNESCO, 2005 p. 13).

En consecuencia, en estos últimos años han existido distintas interpretaciones del término inclusión por parte de diferentes autores, así como, diferencias en las actuaciones que se deben llevar a cabo en la escuela (Echeita, 2006); no obstante, al analizar la conceptualización propuesta por la UNESCO (2005) se deduce que al posicionarse en una sociedad democrática es necesario reconocer prácticas educativas y sociales encaminadas a una participación activa del individuo tanto en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje como en la organización de los centros escolares (Parrilla, 2002).

Conviene subrayar, que existen cuatro elementos comunes a cualquier definición de inclusión educativa (Ainscow, 2001; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Echeita & Ainscow, 2011), que son:

- La inclusión como proceso, lo cual implica el análisis continuo y constante de alternativas para responder a la diversidad de los individuos en las instituciones educativas.
- La inclusión en la búsqueda de la presencia, la participación y el progreso, como principios que rigen cualquier acto democrático donde deben estar presentes los principios de equidad e igualdad.
- La inclusión obliga a la identificación y la eliminación de barreras, dado que estas últimas imposibilitan la actuación efectiva de los derechos humanos y, por tanto la identidad personal, social y cultural de las personas.
- La inclusión enfatiza sus acciones en grupos de alumnos que presentan elementos constituyentes de algún tipo de exclusión o marginación, lo que sugiere un compromiso educativo y mayor atención con los individuos que se encuentran en circunstancias de más vulnerabilidad.

En este sentido, Booth & Dyson (2006, citado en Muntaner, 2010, p. 9) señalan que la implementación efectiva de la inclusión en las prácticas educativas puede precisarse y concretarse en tres variables, denominadas comúnmente "las tres P", las mismas son definidas en la tabla 1.

	Definiciones
Presencia	El acceso de todo el alumnado a los entornos educativos manifiesten o no necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo, como indica Arnaiz (2003).
Participación	La iniciativa, la toma de decisiones y la implicación en los contextos educativos de todos los alumnos y alumnas, con indiferencia de que posean necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo, tal y como indican Stainback & Stainback (2001).
Progreso	Los estudiantes con independencia de si tienen o no necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo tienen éxito en la etapa escolar, es decir, se les proporcionan la oportunidad de alcanzar y mantener un nivel aceptable de conocimientos, como apunta Arnaiz (2003).

Tabla 1. Las tres variables que debe cumplir cualquier proceso educativo inclusivo.

Nota: Fuente elaboración propia.

Las políticas, los marcos de referencia, las investigaciones, las experiencias y las innovaciones sobre la educación inclusiva, en la actualidad, parten de este escenario, lo cual significa "abordar una temática caleidoscópica, un prisma con varias caras o planos, cada uno con ciertas dosis de fundamento" (Arnaiz, 2012, p. 31); como por ejemplo la formación, inicial y continua, y el papel que el profesorado juega en estas prácticas, siendo una pieza elemental (Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo, 2014) tanto en la educación como en la sociedad.

El posicionamiento y las prácticas docentes inclusivas fundamentaran una cultura educativa basada en aspectos democráticos y plurales, legitimando la diversidad, en todo sus espectros, como un aspecto esencial de las sociedades globalizadas y de los centros escolares, donde como señalan Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo (2014, p. 125) "la escuela representa el único espacio de contacto obligatorio entre diversos grupos sociales, en el que se dirime la experiencia de cooperación o de conflicto".

Así entendida, requiere que los centros dejen de ser instrumentos de homogeneización, de normalización y de asimilación para convertirse en contextos inclusivos y eficaces en el marco de una escuela para todos. Y, desde un punto de vista organizativo y curricular, que todos los ámbitos y disciplinas científicas se aproximen a este fenómeno, ofreciendo un panorama tanto de análisis y/o valoración de dicha cuestión, como de posibles soluciones o directrices a tomar para alcanzar la meta. Este cambio implica, igualmente, un proceso de aprendizaje, de construcción de un futuro común, basado en las aportaciones de todos y en el reconocimiento de la diferencia desde un plano de igualdad (Arnaiz, 2012 pp. 31 - 32).

En resumen, la integración en la escuela ha pasado a ser inclusión en la escuela, desarrollando programas y adaptando el contexto para que todo el alumnado sin o con algún tipo de necesidad o diversidad formen parte activa de su aula y de su comunidad, así como, de la sociedad en la que conviven, promoviendo de esta forma las estrategias de presencia,

participación y progreso, favoreciendo nuevas iniciativas por parte del profesorado que consideren esta nueva realidad.

III. Los videojuegos como principio didáctico en la educación y en la inclusión

El juego ha sido un recurso y un principio didáctico empleado durante muchas décadas en educación, en especial en las etapas destinadas a la infancia y a la primaria (Candia, 2013; Delgado, 2011), por los docentes para el desarrollo del proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje. En la actualidad, con la incorporación de los medios digitales a la sociedad, este elemento ha desembocado en los videojuegos y los juegos digitales, los cuales pueden ser empleados con la misma funcionalidad que los primeros.

Las distintas teorías psicológicas consideran el juego como uno de los elementos a analizar en la adquisición del aprendizaje, Piaget a través de su teoría constructivista adjudica a éste la construcción de pensamientos y comportamientos o Ausubel en su concepción de un aprendizaje significativo le atribuye aspectos motivacionales y de interés para la adquisición del conocimiento (Sampedro, 2012).

“Los juegos educativos han demostrado que fomentan la implicación en el pensamiento crítico, en la resolución creativa de problemas y en el trabajo en equipo, habilidades que conducen a soluciones para dilemas sociales y ambientales complejos” (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014 p. 42). Estas observaciones se relacionan también, con un conjunto de desarrollos que se le atribuye al empleo didáctico de los videojuegos y juegos digitales (Marín & García, 2005; Marín & Ramírez, 2012):

- Desarrollo del pensamiento reflexivo y del razonamiento, favoreciendo la toma de conciencia de lo aprendido y contribuyendo al progreso del aprendizaje.
- Desarrollo de la capacidad de atención y la memoria, como procesos psicológicos cognitivos necesarios para cualquier acto de aprendizaje (Sampedro, 2012).
- Desarrollo de las habilidades necesarias para resolver conflictos o situaciones problemáticas, asimismo, el desarrollo de las capacidades de trabajo colaborativo, ambos son elementos clave en la práctica de la inclusión (Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo, 2014)
- Desarrollo de la capacidad de superación, con la motivación que produce el alcanzar culminar el fin del juego provoca la necesidad de progresar en el conocimiento y aprendizaje.
- Desarrollo de la capacidad de relación, de conductas socialmente aceptadas y la disminución de conductas impulsivas y de autodestrucción adquiriendo pautas de convivencia y de resolución de conflictos de forma lúdica (Romera, Ortega & Monks, 2008)

En consonancia, a la hora de diseñar videojuegos y juegos digitales se debe considerar, entre otros, estos aspectos y desarrollos mencionados (Morales, 2013), asimismo meditar el objetivo final del proceso de aprendizaje que se desea conseguir.

En este sentido, los videojuegos se convierten en recursos muy eficaces para la inclusión en las aulas, considerando que por sí mismos propician la socialización, la equidad y la igualdad,

eliminan barreras producidas por cualquier tipología de exclusión (cultural, ideológica, religiosa, social, etc.) y, concretamente favorece los principios de presencia, participación y progreso, los videojuegos "son elementos que no deben pasar desapercibidos de la cotidianidad de la vida social y educativa de los individuos, permitirá a los estudiantes ver su evolución y crecimiento, incentivando así sus ganas de participar y en consecuencia de aprender" (Marín & Martín, 2014 p. 25).

La reflexión sobre la implementación y aplicación del juego y su alternativa tecnológica y digital, videojuegos y juegos digitales, como principios didácticos que propician una mejora en el proceso de aprendizaje y posibilitan experiencias innovadoras en la enseñanza, dado su carácter motivador y potenciador del desarrollo cognitivo general, nos lleva a incidir sobre su beneficio en el posicionamiento cultural educativo inclusivo, en otros términos, la colaboración que el empleo de los videojuegos produce en los espacios escolares que se atribuyen a unas prácticas inclusivas para dotar al alumnado de una educación acorde a los requerimientos de las sociedades actuales.

En este sentido, diversas investigaciones (Cagiltay, Ozcelik & Ozcelik, 2015; Hamlen, 2011; Hong, Cheng, Hwang, Lee & Chang, 2009) ponen de manifiesto la relación que existe entre las estrategias cognitivas y el uso de videojuegos o juegos digitales, destacando que cada jugador desarrolla unas habilidades mentales o estilos para conseguir el objetivo final, superar el juego, lo cual beneficia la cognición de los participantes y, por tanto facilita las destrezas para incrementar el aprendizaje.

De igual forma, estos estudios, reflejan el binomio motivación y empleo de videojuegos y juegos digitales, lo cual, como sugiere Hamlen (2011), tiene su base en perspectivas psicológicas, basadas principalmente en el disfrute que provoca la superación de las metas, provocando la atracción y la atención hacia la tarea encomendada en el juego.

De acuerdo con estas ideas, se infiere que el empleo de videojuegos facilita el desarrollo y progreso de estrategias cognitivas, al mismo tiempo, refuerza la motivación por el aprendizaje de los mismos, implicando que este recurso o herramienta pedagógica, aplicada de forma eficaz en las escuelas, favorezca factores psicológicos y cognitivos en el alumnado, propiciando la atención de las características individuales y de personalidad como elementos esenciales de la diversidad, dando respuesta a una educación de calidad adaptada a las necesidades y peculiaridades de cada estudiante.

Mientras un número creciente de instituciones y programas educativos están experimentando con los videojuegos, también se ha observado una atención cada vez mayor rodeando la gamification -la integración de elementos, mecánicas y contextos de los videojuegos en situaciones y escenarios ajenos a ellos - (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014 p. 42).

La integración de videojuegos a las aulas se ha convertido en una realidad en las instituciones educativas, precisamente el Informe Horizon de 2014 expone algunos ejemplos de las experiencias que se están llevando a cabo en estos momentos, asimismo, señala la implementación de este proceso en los próximos años como elemento asociado a las tecnologías educativas, por tanto es evidente la necesidad de analizar su significación para el desarrollo de una educación inclusiva que considera la diversidad como motor de la sociedad y el aprendizaje.

IV. La significación del videojuego para el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva

Como se ha comentado con anterioridad, las políticas y actuaciones educativas se encaminan al desarrollo de las competencias, entre las que se destaca la competencia social y cívica porque como señala Pagès (2009)

Tal vez se la pueda considerar la competencia principal de la enseñanza obligatoria, ya que su finalidad última es formar ciudadanos y ciudadanas capaces de saber convivir democráticamente con los demás, de participar en la vida social, laboral, cultural y política de su mundo, intentando mejorarla. Ciertamente, para formar ciudadanos y ciudadanas son necesarias las demás competencias, y muchos conocimientos, pero... ser ciudadano o ciudadana, saber convivir con los demás, es una condición sine qua non de las sociedades democráticas (p.7)

Conforme a lo expresado por este autor el desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica lleva implícito la aplicación y adquisición de una cultura inclusiva, que se debe tratar desde los primeros años de escolarización, a través de la iniciativa y la innovación de los docentes.

Conviene subrayar que en la 48ª Conferencia Internacional de Educación, titulada "Inclusive Education: The way of the future", celebrada en el año 2008, promovida por la UNESCO se fundamenta la importancia del papel docente para crear entornos inclusivos como uno de los agentes de cambio en la educación de calidad, además, en ella se presentan interrogantes como, por ejemplo, si los docentes durante su formación inicial tienen posibilidades de adquirir "cultura de la inclusión" o si se le dota de las competencias necesarias y de las herramientas metodológicas acordes para considerar las necesidades, elaborar estrategias pedagógicas y abordar así la diversidad.

En este sentido, Barrio (2009) señala una serie de aspectos que pueden considerarse a la hora de formular acciones, estrategias y metodologías inclusivas por parte de los docentes, estos son:

- El origen se encuentra en las prácticas y conocimientos previos, los docentes conocen el ambiente y contexto donde desarrollan su labor, al igual que al alumnado al que dirigen los procesos de enseñanza – aprendizaje, este hecho les facilitará establecer mecanismos más creativos y prácticos para promover una interacción más inclusiva entre alumno – alumno y alumno – profesor.
- Las diferencias pueden servir como oportunidades de aprendizaje, buscando en la diversidad un elemento para suscitar nuevas intervenciones, que pueden resultar de la práctica diaria y de las experiencias previas del docente.
- Examinar que se barreras existen para la participación, analizando y evaluando los elementos que imposibilitan la implicación, autonomía y toma de decisiones del alumnado; para posteriormente incorporar actuaciones que potencien la participación de todos (Cabero & Córdoba, 2009)
- Apoyar el aprendizaje usando los recursos disponibles, el empleo eficaz y eficiente de las herramientas y recursos, incluyendo los digitales, así como los profesionales y las

familias que comprenden la comunidad educativa dado que su cooperación facilitará la implementación de las acciones inclusivas en el aula y en el centro. Algunos ejemplos de este aspecto lo encontramos en los grupos interactivos (Álvarez & Puigdemívol, 2014) o en el aprendizaje cooperativo (Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo, 2014), los mismos se sustentan en las teorías socio – cultural y dialógica del aprendizaje.

- Desarrollar un código común entre profesionales, la relación con otros profesionales del campo educativo favorece la divulgación y comunicación de las experiencias inclusivas llevadas a cabo en cada contexto, las mismas inducen a la reflexión y el perfeccionamiento sobre la labor docente.
- Establecer condiciones para innovar, dado que el docente es el principal precursor de las experiencias e innovaciones educativas e inclusivas es necesario dotarle de un clima de trabajo que fomente estas iniciativas (García & López, 2012)

En lo referente al fomento de la educación inclusiva, una escuela para todos, se ha señalado anteriormente, que la misma se consigue a través del desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica logrando de esta forma que la inclusión se traslade a la sociedad, para lograr esta finalidad el docente debe prestar atención a las innovaciones educativas, estableciendo condiciones para la misma y proporcionando experiencias enriquecedoras al alumnado a través del proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje.

Estas oportunidades para el aprendizaje y desarrollo de la competencia cívica y social puede conseguirse a través de la implementación de los videojuegos, dado que como señala el estudio realizado por Puig & Morales (2015) entre las estrategias didácticas que facilitan el desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica, clave para la formación de la personalidad posibilitando comunicar las capacidades y conocimientos que le permitan ser ciudadanos democráticos (Pagès, 2009), se encuentra el juego o su alternativa digital los videojuegos dado que los mismos fundamentan la presencia, participación y progreso.

Constituye una actividad de importancia capital para la adquisición de ciertos aspectos básicos para la vida de las personas, tales como las conductas de apego y vinculación afectiva, las habilidades comunicativas y la capacidad de gestionar la libertad y la toma de decisiones, así como el desarrollo del pensamiento creativo. En definitiva, la actividad lúdica permite al niño o la niña poner en práctica las competencias necesarias para prepararse para la vida en sociedad (Romera, Ortega & Monks, 2008 p. 195).

Como señalan estas autoras los videojuegos se convierten en una herramienta didáctica eficaz en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje para desarrollar todos los planos de la inclusión que repercuten en la sociedad a través de la competencia social y cívica, tan demanda en las sociedades actuales; con la implementación de los videojuegos, considerando que los mismos se fundamentan en la tecnología y en el espectro digital (Rodríguez & Arroyo, 2014)

- Aumentando el grado de autonomía, independencia y la toma de decisiones proporcionando la participación.
- Facilitarán la individualización de los procesos de aprendizaje, considerando los diferentes estilos de aprendizaje, de comunicación, siendo flexibles con la diversidad de cada sujeto, de esta forma favorece el progreso.

- El entretenimiento y la motivación que llevan en su naturaleza los videojuegos acrecienta la socialización con el resto del grupo y el acceso a la comunidad y el aprendizaje desarrollando la presencia.
- Por otro lado, disminuyen o eliminan las barreras que se pueden producir por la diversidad, facilitando la extinción de la exclusión y la marginalidad reforzando la autoestima y el valor de uno mismo (Marín & Ramírez, 2012)

En definitiva, el videojuego y los juegos digitales son recursos innovadores, eficaces y significativos para el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje en el marco de una educación inclusiva, con la meta de adquirir la competencia social y cívica como estandarte de una habilidades y conocimientos que hacen al individuo un ciudadano activo con presencia, participación y progreso en su etapa educativa y en la sociedad en la que convive.

Dejando a un lado la interacción social que provoca la aplicación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales y, por tanto el desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica; al mismo tiempo, estos recursos didáctico – pedagógicos, en concreto los denominados “serious games” estimulan la conciencia cultural, como señalan Earp, Ott, Popescu, Romero & Usart (2014), lo cual favorece la adquisición del concepto de diferencia de forma óptima induciendo la toma de conciencia de las aportaciones de los otros y la participación activa o conjunta con un fin común, el dominio del juego.

La aplicación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales en la educación favorece el potencial educativo, asimismo, como indican Earp, Ott, Popescu, Romero & Usart (2014), fortalecen otras habilidades y valores como la colaboración entre iguales, la creatividad, el liderazgo y la actitud positiva ante el fallo; es precisamente este último contenido el que facilita la presencia o acceso de todos los estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje, dado que como variable de la educación inclusiva asegura el acercamiento a la escuela sin perjuicio de la exclusión.

Asimismo, la implementación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales posibilitan, como se ha comentado con anterioridad, el empleo de distintas estrategias de cognición que favorecen la diversidad al desarrollar de manera sustancial las características individuales y de personalidad, lo cual implica el progreso de todos los estudiantes, al proporcionar la oportunidad de alcanzar y mantener un nivel de éxito; de esta forma se hace patente otra de las variables de los procesos educativos inclusivos.

Por último, el atractivo que subyace en el uso de los videojuegos y juegos digitales potencia la participación del alumnado, tercera variable de la educación inclusiva, favoreciendo la iniciativa y la toma de decisiones en el objetivo final alcanzar el dominio del juego.

Al considerar, los elementos que confluyen en la aplicación y uso de los videojuegos, podemos observar la capacidad y potencial que tienen los mismos en la adquisición del aprendizaje, de igual forma, como proporcionan escenarios para el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva, concretamente las variables que la propagan la presencia, la participación y el progreso de todo el alumnado sin distinciones. En este sentido, la implementación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales, en las aulas, se convierten en un elemento metodológico de gran valor para los docentes, al desencadenar destrezas, habilidades y actitudes que integran en una actividad, de forma activa, a todo el alumnado considerando sus capacidades individuales y globalizando el proceso educativo.

V. Conclusión

En estas líneas hemos querido reflejar la relevancia de emplear los videojuegos o los juegos digitales como recursos que favorecen y facilitan el proceso de inclusión en las aulas, dado que la implementación de los mismos es un hecho inminente atendiendo al Informe Horizon de 2014.

Aprender a mantener relaciones interpersonales efectivas se convierte en una tarea prioritaria en la escuela en todos los niveles de edad, pero particularmente entre los más pequeños, con los que habría que acentuar la educación para el desarrollo y la competencia social (Romera, Ortega & Monks, 2008 p. 195).

La implementación de los videojuegos puede ayudar en el desarrollo de conocimientos y habilidades para desenvolverse en sociedades democráticas, dado que como sugieren estas autoras es necesario mantener relaciones interpersonales efectivas que consideren la cohesión social partiendo de las diversidades de cada individuo.

De esta forma los videojuegos se convierten en elementos espléndidos para potenciar la motivación y atención del alumnado en su proceso de aprendizaje, así mismo, su empleo y aplicación en las aulas proporciona condicionantes para acercar una cultura educativa inclusiva al conocimiento de cualquier materia o área de conocimiento considerando que aporta una serie de desarrollos y aspectos, entre los que se destacan la presencia, la participación y el progreso educativo. Por otro lado, el desarrollo de estos principios facilitará la adquisición de la competencia social y cívica, siendo esta precisamente la que llevará a una sociedad más inclusiva.

No debemos olvidar, que los videojuegos forman parte de las actividades diarias de la mayoría de los sujetos, en especial de los infantes y adolescentes, por este motivo es un recurso atractivo que se puede y se debe incorporar al aulas, ya que sus potencialidades y beneficios propician la sociabilidad de los sujetos, siendo un factor clave en las sociedades actuales donde la diversidad es una condición.

Es precisamente los elementos y aspectos que se hallan en el uso de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales lo que provoca que su aplicación en las aulas favorezca el aumento del potencial del aprendizaje en todo el alumnado, con indiferencia de sus características personales e individuales, dado que la implementación del mismo, como indican diversas investigaciones (Cagiltay, Ozcelik & Ozcelik, 2015; Hamlen, 2011; Hong, Cheng, Hwang, Lee & Chang, 2009) propicia el intercambio comunicativo entre iguales, con un fin último, la búsqueda de la superación de la tarea y el reto propuesto en el juego.

Este intercambio entre iguales, ayuda a la inclusión de todos en los procesos educativos beneficiando el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva; sin embargo, la aplicación de esta herramienta metodológica en las aulas en la búsqueda de aumentar las potencialidades de aprendizaje de todos los estudiantes, se convierte en una planificación y programación minuciosa del docente, dado que debe tener en cuenta diversos aspectos para su puesta en práctica, tales como los contenidos que se aprenderán, el nivel de dificultad, los estilos cognitivos que el alumnado empleará, la temporalidad de la actividad, etc.

En conclusión, los videojuegos y los juegos digitales son una herramienta metodológica de gran valor educativo para potenciar la inclusión del alumnado en las aulas e involucrarle en su propio aprendizaje, aunque esta implementación en los escenarios educativos provocan la necesidad de capacitación de los docentes para la eficacia de los mismos en la presencia, participación y progreso, como variables que sustentan la educación inclusiva.

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Tecnologías emergentes para la enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales. Una experiencia con el uso de Realidad Aumentada en la formación inicial de maestros

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Resumen

La Realidad Aumentada está considerada como una de las tecnologías emergentes con mayor impacto en la docencia. El presente artículo recoge una investigación sobre una experiencia didáctica realizada con estudiantes universitarios, futuros maestros, en el campo de las ciencias sociales, con el objetivo de conocer su opinión sobre la Realidad Aumentada y su aplicación educativa. La investigación, que siguió un enfoque de tipo mixto (cuantitativo y cualitativo), se llevó a cabo en estudiantes del Grado de Maestro en Educación Infantil y Primaria, en la Facultad de Educación de Albacete (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha) en el primer trimestre del curso 2014-2015. Se administró el Cuestionario LabinTic_RA (Cózar, De Moya, Hernández y Hernández, 2014) para conocer la percepción de los estudiantes sobre la Realidad Aumentada respecto a su utilización en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje y su nivel de conocimiento de esta herramienta. Los resultados revelaron la valoración muy positiva que conceden los estudiantes a las TIC en educación y a la Realidad Aumentada por sus beneficios didácticos: motivación, aprendizaje interactivo o adquisición significativa de conocimientos, entre otros. La virtualización de la enseñanza es una realidad, siendo necesaria una formación inicial de los futuros docentes orientada al conocimiento y uso de tecnologías educativas emergentes.

Palabras clave

Tecnologías emergentes, realidad aumentada, ciencias sociales, formación inicial del profesorado.

Emerging Technologies in Social Sciences Teaching. An Experience Using Augmented Reality in Teacher Training

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Abstract

Augmented Reality is considered one of the emerging technologies with the highest impact on teaching. The current paper shows a research about an educative experience carried out in university students, future teachers, in the field of social sciences, in order to know their opinion about Augmented Reality and its educational application. This study, which followed a mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative), was conducted among students in the Master Degree at the Faculty of Education in Albacete (University of Castilla-La Mancha) in the first term of academic year 2014/2015. LabinTic_RA Questionnaire (Cozar, De Moya, Hernandez and Hernandez, 2014) was administered to analyse students' perceptions about Augmented Reality. Thus, students' use in the teaching and learning process and their knowledge of this tool were taking into account for our research. Results revealed that students give a highly positive assessment to ICT and Augmented Reality for its educative benefits: motivation, interactive learning or significant acquisition of knowledge, among others. The virtualization of education is a reality, so it is necessary the teacher training in order to know and to use emerging educational technologies.

Keywords

Emerging technologies, augmented reality, social sciences, teacher training.

I. Introducción

La integración de la competencia digital en el ámbito educativo ha tenido que hacer frente a numerosos desafíos que han permitido afrontar los nuevos tiempos, planteando nuevos modelos de aprendizaje, procedimientos, estrategias y recursos que enriquezcan el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje. A nivel institucional se han realizado grandes esfuerzos económicos para facilitar su penetración en la práctica educativa. En las aulas, se han introducido ordenadores, pizarras digitales, notebook o tablets pc, entre otros, y junto a estas herramientas se han desarrollado gran cantidad de materiales multimedia interactivos y recursos didácticos que permiten el desarrollo de numerosas habilidades cognitivas, así como la adquisición y consolidación de las competencias digitales básicas (Del Moral, 2009).

En el marco de estos cambios, no encontramos un único modelo pedagógico que resuma las teorías de aprendizaje de la nueva era digital. Entre las "*teorías para aprender con tecnologías emergentes*" sugeridas por autores como Anderson (2010) o Wheeler (2012) aparecen planteamientos no tan novedosos como el constructivismo y la teoría de la complejidad, y otros nuevos conceptos formulados tras la aparición de la web e Internet como la pedagogía de la proximidad (Mejias, 2005), la heutagogía (Hase and Kenyon, 2000 y 2007), el conectivismo (Siemens, 2005), el aprendizaje rizomático (Cormier, 2008), el aprendizaje autorregulado (Beishuizen, Carneiro y Steffens, 2007), la teoría LaaN (Chatti, Schroeder y Jarke, 2012 y Chatti, 2013) o el aprendizaje entre iguales (Corneli, 2012 y Corneli y Danoff, 2011), entre otros, que conforman el ecosistema pedagógico de la integración de las TIC en el aula (Adell y Castañeda, 2013).

Toda una serie de pedagogías emergentes que surgen alrededor de las tecnologías apellidadas con el mismo calificativo -emergentes- (Veletsianos, 2010) y su introducción en la educación, y que intentan aprovechar todo su potencial comunicativo, informacional, colaborativo, interactivo, creativo e innovador en el marco de una nueva cultura del aprendizaje (Adell y Castañeda, 2012).

En este artículo pretendemos acercarnos a una de esas denominadas tecnologías informáticas emergentes: la Realidad Aumentada (RA). Una tecnología que nos ofrece un interesante conjunto de aplicaciones y modos de implementación que enriquecen la práctica educativa desde la visualización directa o indirecta de elementos del mundo real combinados (o aumentados) con elementos virtuales generados por un ordenador, dando lugar a una realidad mixta, en tiempo real y en consonancia semántica con objetos del entorno (Cobo y Moravec, 2011).

II. Tecnologías emergentes: Realidad Aumentada

La Realidad Aumentada se define en el mundo científico a principios de los años noventa cuando la tecnología basada en ordenadores de procesamiento rápido, técnicas de renderizado de gráficos en tiempo real, y sistemas de seguimiento de precisión portables, permiten implementar la combinación de imágenes generadas por el ordenador sobre la visión del mundo real que tiene el usuario (Basogain et al, 2007). En 1992, Caudell y Mizell

introducirían este término en la comunicación "Augmented Reality: an application of headsup display technology to manual manufacturing processes" para el congreso *IEEE Hawaii International Conference on System Science*. Poco tiempo después, Bareld y Hendrix (1995), la definirían como la ampliación del mundo real con imágenes sintéticas, en un escenario, en el que estas imágenes se utilizan como un complemento de la escena del mundo real. Ese mismo año Durlach y Mavor, en un informe sobre realidad virtual, describen la Realidad Aumentada como sistemas que combinan entornos reales y virtuales. Y en 1997, Ronald Azuma, uno de los autores más citados en esta materia, se refiere a esta tecnología como la fusión de una visión directa o indirecta de un entorno físico (mundo real), cuyos elementos se combinan con objetos digitales para crear una realidad mixta en tiempo real. Además deja establecidas sus tres características más significativas: combinar lo real con lo virtual; ser interactiva y en tiempo real; y estar registrada en 3D.

En los últimos años ha aumentado considerablemente el número de publicaciones que centran su atención sobre esta tecnología, proliferando del mismo modo, las definiciones y clasificaciones sobre las formas y tecnologías que se recogen bajo este término. Una definición completa, a la par que sencilla, es la que recogen Estebanell y otros (2012: 136) quienes la presentan como "una tecnología que permite añadir información virtual sobre la realidad". Un proceso que se realiza en tiempo real a través de la captura de una cámara, estableciendo una relación espacial entre la información virtual y su entorno real. De este modo, objetos virtuales bidimensionales y/o tridimensionales se superponen al mundo real, suscitando la coexistencia de dos mundos, virtual y real, en el mismo espacio, en tiempo real (De Pedro y Martínez, 2012). Kato (2010) se centra en su utilidad y la define como información virtual (objetos o anotaciones) que pueden ser superpuestas a imágenes del mundo real como si coexistieran.

En muchas ocasiones, la RA se confunde con la Realidad Virtual con quien comparte algunas características en común. La principal diferencia entre ambas radica en que la Realidad Aumentada no reemplaza el mundo real, como en el caso de la Realidad Virtual, sino que conserva lo que percibe el usuario, completándolo con información virtual. Como señala Tapia (2008), la Realidad Aumentada lleva la información dentro del mundo real del usuario en vez de llevar al usuario dentro del mundo virtual del ordenador. En este sentido, resulta interesante hacer referencia al continuo de Milgram (1994), citado por múltiples autores, en el que se establece una clasificación de los diferentes niveles a los que podemos asistir en una línea entre la realidad y la virtualidad, en base a la cantidad de entorno generado por ordenador. Al área comprendida entre los dos extremos, donde se combina lo real y lo virtual, se denomina Realidad Mezclada o Mixta. De Pedro (2011: 301) señala que la RA es "capaz de complementar la percepción e interacción con el mundo real, brindando al usuario un escenario real aumentado con información adicional generada por ordenador. De este modo, la realidad física se combina con elementos virtuales disponiéndose de una realidad mixta en tiempo real". Interacción, realidad mixta y tiempo real se convierten, sin duda, en las claves de la RA: el usuario interactúa con el entorno y éste, en tiempo real, completa con información virtual el mundo real que percibe el usuario (Basagoain et al, 2007; Prendes, 2015).

También son numerosas las clasificaciones sobre las formas y tecnologías que se suelen englobar bajo el mismo término de Realidad Aumentada. Portalés (2008) establece su catalogación, atendiendo a distintos criterios: según el entorno físico en el que se desarrolla la aplicación, pueden ser cerrados o al aire libre o abiertos; según la extensión que

abarquen, locales o ubicuos; según la movilidad de los dispositivos de registro y/o displays, podemos distinguir entre sistemas móviles o sistemas espaciales; según el número de usuarios que simultáneamente pueden interactuar con el sistema, individuales o colaborativos; y, según el tipo de colaboración establecida, presenciales o remotos.

Estebanell y otros (2012) optan por una clasificación más sencilla pero que engloba todos los formatos de Realidad Aumentada:

- Realidad Aumentada basada en el reconocimiento de formas. La aplicación que ejecuta la RA hace "aparecer" algún elemento (imagen, audio, vídeo o modelos en 3D) cuando la cámara de un dispositivo móvil o de un ordenador reconoce una forma determinada. Estas formas pueden ser de distintos tipos: marcadores, imágenes u objetos.
- Realidad Aumentada basada en el reconocimiento de la posición. Aquí, la información que se añade sobre el escenario real viene condicionada por la posición, orientación e inclinación del dispositivo móvil utilizado. Para ello es imprescindible disponer de un dispositivo móvil de última generación que disponga de GPS, brújula y acelerómetros y conexión a internet. El GPS detecta la posición exacta en la que se encuentra el usuario, la brújula descubre la orientación y los acelerómetros obtienen información de la inclinación del dispositivo móvil. Con toda esta información, se presenta en la pantalla del dispositivo información adicional en forma de objetos 3D, imágenes o indicadores de puntos de interés (POIs), entre otros.

Lens-Fitzgerald (2009), cofundador de Layar, clasifica la RA en niveles de acuerdo a su forma de trabajo, parámetros y técnicas empleadas, distinguiendo cuatro (del 0 al 3):

Nivel 0 – Hiperenlace con el mundo físico (Códigos QR);

Nivel 1 – R.A. basada en marcadores.

Nivel 2 – R.A. markerless (reconocimiento de imágenes u objetos).

Nivel 3 – Visión aumentada (Smart Glasses).

En principio, a más nivel, mayores son las posibilidades de las aplicaciones (Prendes, 2015). No obstante, es necesario señalar que entre los autores que han abordado estas clasificaciones (Estebanell et al., 2012, Lens-Fitzgerald, 2009, Reinoso 2012, Rice, 2009) no existe un criterio estable en cuanto a los niveles y a las tecnologías que agrupan.

En nuestro caso, nos centraremos en el Nivel 1 de Lens-Fitzgerald, la Realidad Aumentada de PC o escritorio que utiliza el reconocimiento de marcadores, por ser en la que hemos trabajado fundamentalmente con nuestros alumnos. Su funcionamiento se centra en la combinación de la información virtual sincronizada superpuesta sobre el mundo real que se proyectará en la pantalla del ordenador o del aula. La información se capta a través de un dispositivo de entrada, una webcam, a la que se muestran los markers o marcadores, que son los patrones en blanco y negro que indican al sistema donde debe aparecer la imagen virtual creada previamente. El ordenador a través de un software presenta la información asociada y nos permite, girando los marcadores, ver la imagen en 3D desde diferentes ángulos para apreciar mejor todos sus detalles.

En internet podemos encontrar ya algunas aplicaciones de RA para ordenador, móvil, Tablet, consolas, incluso para pizarra digital que nos permiten tanto crear modelos 3D (Trimble Sketchup, Blender o Autodesk 3ds Max), como visualizarlos integrados en objetos digitales educativos (cuadernia o dobook).

III. Nuevas fronteras: Realidad Aumentada y Educación

En los últimos años la Realidad Aumentada se ha convertido en una de las tecnologías emergentes con mayor impacto en la docencia. Ya en 2002 Billinghamurst vaticinaba que la tecnología de la Realidad Aumentada había madurado hasta tal punto que era posible aplicarla en gran variedad de ámbitos y era en educación el área donde esta tecnología podría ser especialmente valiosa. Este anuncio se hacía realidad cuando unos años después, la revista *Time* (2010) la incluía en el cuarto puesto de las tendencias tecnológicas de ese año, y también ese mismo año, la compañía *Gartner Research* la identificaba como una de las diez tecnologías más disruptivas de los últimos años, con una previsión de uso, en torno a 2014, del orden del 30% de los usuarios de dispositivos móviles. En el informe *The 2012 Horizon Report* realizado por Johnson y otros, se revelaba que en cuatro o cinco años ocuparía un lugar destacado entre las tecnologías con mayor impacto en la docencia, el aprendizaje y la investigación creativa.

Junto a estos informes, también podemos encontrar otros estudios que ponen de relieve los beneficios de la RA con fines didácticos, debido a la facilidad que posee para captar la atención del estudiantes al poder crear sistemas de aprendizaje en nuevos entornos virtuales tridimensionales e interactivos, en los que se permite a los alumnos experimentar modelos tangibles de lugares y objetos (García y Pérez, 2010), reforzando el aprendizaje e incrementando la motivación por aprender (Reinoso, 2012). Terán (2012) nos ofrece algunas de las ventajas del uso de la RA en educación como son:

- Desarrollo de habilidades cognitivas, espaciales, perceptivo motoras y temporales en los estudiantes, indistintamente de su edad y nivel académico.
- Reforzamiento de la atención, concentración, memoria inmediata (corto plazo) y memoria mediata (largo plazo) en sus formas visuales y auditivas, así como del razonamiento.
- Activación de procesos cognitivos de aprendizaje. La RA trabaja de forma activa y consciente sobre estos procesos, porque permite confirmar, refutar o ampliar el conocimiento, generar nuevas ideas, sentimientos u opiniones acerca del mundo.
- Formación de actitudes de reflexión al explicar los fenómenos observados o brindar soluciones a problemas específicos.
- Suministra un entorno eficaz de comunicación para el trabajo educativo, porque reduce la incertidumbre del conocimiento acerca de un objeto.
- Aumenta la actitud positiva de los estudiantes ante el aprendizaje, así como su motivación o interés en el tema que se esté abordando, reforzando capacidades y competencias (independencia, iniciativa y principio de la auto-actividad o trabajo independiente).

Podemos añadir otra ventaja destinada a los docentes: la de crear nuestros contenidos digitales educativos propios y contextualizados utilizando esta tecnología, gracias a numerosas aplicaciones distribuidas de forma gratuita para su uso no comercial bajo la licencia pública general GNU como ARToolKit o Aumentaty Author que nos permiten crear, visualizar y manipular modelos 3D de forma rápida y sencilla. Asimismo, existen ya algunos repositorios de escenas de Realidad Aumentada como el desarrollado por el Centro Aragonés

de Tecnologías para la Educación (<http://www.catedu.es/webcateduantigua/index.php/descargas/realidad-aumentada>). Y también podemos encontrar un número considerable de aplicaciones, como las presentadas en Portalés (2008), Estebanell y otros (2012), Carracedo y Martínez (2012) y Reinoso (2012). Precisamente, en la publicación de este último autor se examinan seis aplicaciones significativas de la Realidad Aumentada en educación como son: aprendizaje basado en el descubrimiento, desarrollo de habilidades profesionales, juegos educativos con RA, modelado de objetos 3D, libros con RA y materiales didácticos.

Estos beneficios para alumnos y profesores son defendidos por buena parte de los autores ya citados. Algunos se muestran partidarios decididos de introducir la RA en el aula convencidos por sus potencialidades en dispositivos móviles y la superación de las limitaciones temporales y espaciales en los entornos de aprendizaje (Estebanell et al, 2012). Otros esgrimen sus bondades en cuanto a posibilitar la interacción entre realidad y virtualidad (Billinghurst, 2002), viabilizar determinados contenidos didácticos que no están al alcance de todos y aportar interactividad, juego, experimentación, colaboración, etc. (González, 2013). Del mismo modo son interesantes las aportaciones desde el plano metodológico. Roussou (2004) partiendo de los enfoques "learning through activity" o "learning by doing" y "learning through play" destaca que la RA ayudará al proceso de aprendizaje de los alumnos, sobre todo, por el alto grado de interactividad que proporciona frente a los recursos y métodos tradicionales.

Junto a estas ventajas, también aparecen temores ante su aplicación en las aulas fundamentalmente por dos motivos: su elevado coste económico (Roussou, 2004) -opinión que como desarrollaremos posteriormente, no compartimos-, y lo reaccionaria que ha sido tradicionalmente la educación a los cambios. Reinoso (2012) a pesar de reconocer el enorme potencial de esta tecnología, manifiesta abiertamente sus dudas acerca de la obtención de resultados positivos al introducirla en los centros educativos como un recurso didáctico al uso.

IV. Realidad Aumentada en el aula

La experiencia didáctica que se presenta en esta investigación se ha llevado a cabo durante el primer cuatrimestre del curso 2014/2015 en la asignatura Patrimonio cultural de la mención de Historia, Cultura y Patrimonio de los Grados de Maestro en Educación Infantil y Educación Primaria de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete. En ella se pretende que los alumnos conozcan las posibilidades educativas que les ofrece el patrimonio cultural de Castilla-La Mancha e introducirles en el uso de las herramientas, recursos y aplicaciones didácticas necesarias para enseñar esos contenidos, en su futura práctica docente.

Teniendo en cuenta las competencias de la titulación que la asignatura contribuye a alcanzar, así como, los objetivos y resultados de aprendizaje esperados, el profesor, apoyado por el grupo de investigación "LabinTic. Laboratorio de integración de las TIC en el aula", propuso una actividad práctica obligatoria en la que los estudiantes debían crear sus propios objetos de Realidad Aumentada para favorecer la instrumentación educativa de las manifestaciones culturales y artísticas de su patrimonio cultural más cercano. Es necesario señalar que durante el curso 2013/2014 estudiantes y profesores de esta asignatura ya estuvieron trabajando sobre esta tecnología a modo de estudio exploratorio, analizando las posibilidades

de los repositorios de escenas de RA que se pueden encontrar en internet y su integración en el diseño de materiales educativos digitales. Este año, el carácter innovador del proyecto presentado recae sobre el papel activo, autónomo y colaborativo que los alumnos tuvieron en la creación de los recursos, potenciando el aprendizaje significativo y experiencial.

Para virtualizar las escenas de RA sin la necesidad de dibujarlas con programas de 3D se ha utilizado la aplicación Autodesk 123d Catch. Una herramienta gratuita que se puede utilizar desde cualquier dispositivo. Se puede descargar desde su web <http://www.123dapp.com/catch> (disponible para Android, iPhone, iPad y PC) o en las tiendas de aplicaciones de los dispositivos móviles. Su manejo es muy sencillo, incluso al usarla con un móvil o Tablet ofrece un asistente a la hora de hacer las fotografías. Tras captar las imágenes se procede a la generación de los objetos en 3D. Un proceso que no es instantáneo, ya que necesita un tiempo de procesamiento. No obstante, la herramienta cuida mucho la interfaz de usuario y avisa con un mensaje cuando la virtualización 3D del objeto ha finalizado. Además incluye sencillos manuales que guían al usuario en todo el proceso de creación.

Una vez elaborado el objeto en 3D, se puede descargar al ordenador en formato .obj que directamente podemos convertir a escena de RA con aplicaciones distribuidas de forma gratuita para su uso no comercial bajo la licencia pública general GNU como Aumentaty Author o ARToolkit, o importarlo a .dae con Blender, 3DStudio o SketchUp para que se pueda visualizar en aquellas herramientas de creación de objetos digitales educativos - doobook o cuadernia-, que no disponen de un motor 3D (en este caso se realiza a través de flash).

En cuanto al desarrollo de esta experiencia didáctica, en primer lugar, una vez constituidos los grupos de trabajo de entre 3-4 componentes, el profesor facilitó un guion en el que se especificaban las competencias que el alumno debía adquirir, los objetivos que se perseguían, las tareas a realizar, así como material de ayuda y apoyo específico para cada una de las herramientas a utilizar. Toda esta información también se puso a disposición de los estudiantes a través de la plataforma campus virtual de la asignatura para facilitar su acceso en cualquier momento. Seguidamente, los estudiantes comenzaron sus proyectos, bajo la supervisión del profesor, eligiendo las imágenes que iban a virtualizar, ampliando los contenidos relacionados y elaborando sus propios materiales para futuros usos educativos. La mayor parte de los proyectos se centraron en las piezas más representativas de las colecciones arqueológicas del arte ibérico de la provincia de Albacete albergadas en el Museo Provincial, apareciendo también obras de época moderna, como la Cruz de Término y otros monumentos repartidos por la ciudad. Una vez realizado todo el proceso de generación de escenas de RA, anteriormente descrito, en la última sesión, se presentaron y defendieron los resultados. En esta sesión se realizó la evaluación a través de un triple sistema configurado por autoevaluación, coevaluación y evaluación por el profesor.

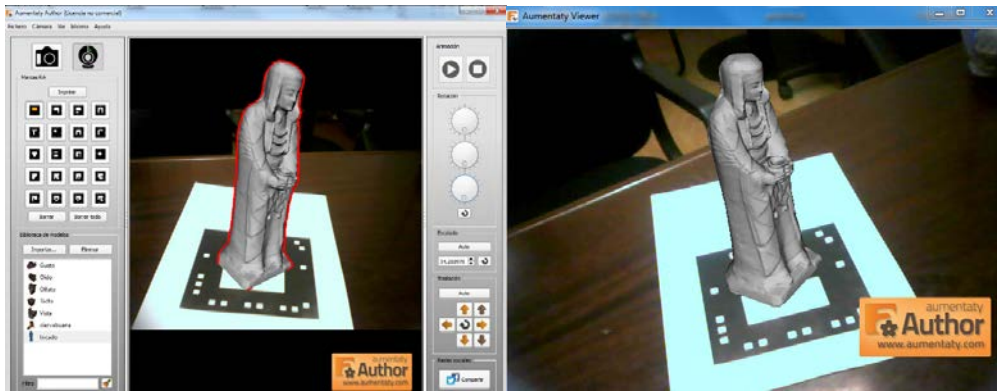


Imagen 1: ejemplo de escena de RA realizada por los alumnos (Dama oferente del Cerro de Los Santos). A partir de estas premisas, este estudio tiene como principal objetivo conocer el grado de opinión de los estudiantes que han participado en esta experiencia didáctica, sobre la Realidad Aumentada y su aplicación en educación.

V. Método

a. Enfoque y diseño

Para dar respuesta al objetivo de investigación planteado, en este estudio se siguió un enfoque de tipo mixto (cuantitativo y cualitativo). El enfoque cuantitativo trata de descubrir el motivo por el que se suceden los hechos a través de las evidencias observadas, la recopilación de datos y el análisis de los mismos (Cardona, 2002), mientras que el enfoque cualitativo está orientado a analizar la realidad social a través de la categorización de la información y el establecimiento de relaciones de los datos obtenidos (Taylor y Bodgan, 1994). Para conocer el grado de opinión de los participantes se optó por un enfoque mixto, como estrategia exploratoria para tener una visión más amplia del fenómeno abordado. Respecto al enfoque cuantitativo, se utilizó un diseño no experimental descriptivo mediante encuesta, y para el cualitativo, un procedimiento de reducción de datos, categorización y codificación a partir de las respuestas a preguntas abiertas recogidas en el cuestionario.

b. Participantes

La muestra ascendió a 23 participantes (13 mujeres, 56%; 10 varones, 44%) del Grado de Maestro de Infantil (5 estudiantes, 22%) y Primaria (18 estudiantes, 78%) de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. Dado que se trataba de una asignatura, se escogió como muestra a la totalidad de los matriculados en la misma, que se llevó a cabo durante el primer trimestre del curso 2014-15.

Para la medición de las variables estudiadas (grado de opinión sobre la Realidad Aumentada), se administró el cuestionario LabinTic_RA (Cózar, De Moya, Hernández y Hernández, 2014), que disponía de 10 ítems con cinco opciones de respuesta tipo Likert (de *Muy en Desacuerdo* a *Muy de Acuerdo*) y cuatro preguntas abiertas para recoger la información cualitativa. Para el análisis cuantitativo de los datos se calcularon estadísticos descriptivos (media y desviación típica) y la prueba no paramétrica *t* de Student para una muestra ($N < 30$) empleando para ello el paquete informático SPSS versión 19 para

Windows. Para el análisis cualitativo, se categorizaron y codificaron las respuestas con el programa ATLAS-ti versión 6 para Windows.

VI. Resultados

En las Tablas 1 y 2 se aportan los resultados correspondientes al análisis cuantitativo de las respuestas de los participantes. En la Tabla 1 se aporta una visión sobre la opinión hacia las TIC aplicadas a la educación y la Tabla 2, de forma más específica, el grado de opinión de los participantes sobre la Realidad Aumentada.

	M	DT	MD	ED	IN	DA	MA
Me gustan las TIC y las uso	4.52	.51	-	-	4	70	26
TIC favorecen la docencia	4.35	.48	-	-	-	65	35
TIC no se usan en el aula	3.83	.93	-	9	26	39	26
TIC ocupan mucho tiempo	2.65	1.01	4	57	13	22	4

Tabla 1: Opinión sobre las TIC aplicadas a la educación
(MD=Muy en Desacuerdo; ED =En Desacuerdo; IN=Indiferente; DA=De Acuerdo; MA=Muy de Acuerdo. Datos expresados en %)

	M	DT	MD	ED	IN	DA	MA
Conocimiento previo de la RA	2.83	1.46	26	22	9	30	13
Es fácil de usar	3.52	.94	4	9	26	52	9
Favorece el proceso de E-A	4.13	.62	-	-	13	61	26
Motiva al alumnado	4.48	.59	-	-	4	44	52
Facilita comprensión contenidos	4.09	.51	-	-	9	74	17
Distrae al alumnado	2.30	.92	17	48	22	13	-
Es una pérdida de tiempo	1.83	1.02	44	44	4	4	4
Necesaria mayor formación	3.43	1.03	-	26	17	44	13
Necesaria para integrar las TIC	3.87	.62	-	-	26	61	13
Mayor utilidad para docentes	2.83	.93	4	35	39	18	4

Tabla 2: Opinión sobre la Realidad Aumentada aplicada a la educación
(MD=Muy en Desacuerdo; ED =En Desacuerdo; IN=Indiferente; DA=De Acuerdo; MA=Muy de Acuerdo. Datos expresados en %)

Tras la realización de la prueba no paramétrica *t* de Student para una muestra ($N < 30$), los resultados revelaron la existencia de cuatro ítems con una respuesta estadísticamente significativa ($p < .05$). Estos ítems fueron: la Realidad Aumentada favorece el aprendizaje ($M = 4.13$; $DT = .62$) ($t = 31.66$; $p = .000$); motiva al alumnado ($M = 4.48$; $DT = .59$) ($t = 36.21$; $p = .000$); facilita la comprensión de contenidos en los centros educativos ($M = 4.09$; $DT = .51$) ($t = 38.08$; $p = .000$); y es una herramienta necesaria para integrar las TIC en el aula ($M = 3.87$; $DT = .62$) ($t = 29.66$; $p = .000$).

En cuanto al análisis cualitativo de los resultados, los datos obtenidos en las respuestas abiertas de los participantes se tradujeron en categorías con el fin de poder realizar comparaciones y posibles contrastes. Así, se establecieron dos categorías: 1) ventajas, y 2) inconvenientes respecto al uso de esta herramienta en las aulas. Siguiendo el procedimiento de diferencial semántico, las respuestas se agruparon dentro de cada categoría en unidades conceptuales significativas para la investigación. Así, en la categoría *ventajas*, el concepto de herramienta "innovadora" obtuvo la mayoría de las respuestas (85%), seguido de "motivadora" (72%), "interesante" (56%), y en menor grado, "útil" y "beneficiosa" (alrededor del 25%). En relación con la segunda categoría, *inconvenientes*, los comentarios se centraron en respuestas como: "La Realidad Aumentada produce distracción y alboroto" (43%), "Hay reticencias para trabajar con esta herramienta" (37%), "Existe un desconocimiento de la herramienta" (32%) o "Es complicada" (22%).

La selección de cinco adjetivos de una lista proporcionada en el cuestionario sobre el uso de la Realidad Aumentada arrojó resultados interesantes para la investigación, ya que la totalidad de los participantes otorgaron una valoración "buena" a esta herramienta, así como consideraba que era "innovadora" (95%), "motivadora" (91%) y "original" (82%). Por el contrario, sólo la mitad de los participantes eligieron el adjetivo "recomendable" (48%) y "dinámica" (43%).

VII. Conclusiones

Los encuestados manifiestan una valoración muy positiva de las TIC en educación en términos de apreciación, uso y utilidad en la docencia. Así, casi la totalidad está de acuerdo o muy de acuerdo al respecto, lo que evidencia una opinión destacada hacia estas herramientas y una necesidad didáctica en su formación inicial, puesto que aunque las utilicen de forma habitual, este hecho no implica que tengan unos conocimientos para su uso educativo. Todos los participantes en el curso coincidieron en que las TIC favorecen la docencia, poniendo de manifiesto que su empleo es un hecho incuestionable en las prácticas pedagógicas actuales.

Respecto a la Realidad Aumentada, el grado de opinión es de acuerdo o muy de acuerdo (aglutina un consenso muy elevado de respuestas) en cuanto a que favorece el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, motiva al alumnado y facilita la comprensión de contenidos. Son muchas las posibilidades que ofrece el uso de la RA para la elaboración de materiales didácticos y actividades de aprendizaje, y, en concreto, tal y como hemos demostrado, a la hora de estudiar y exponer los contenidos relacionados con la Historia e Historia del Arte de nuestro entorno más cercano. Podemos acercar los museos a nuestras aulas, reconstruir emplazamientos históricos, recrear diferentes momentos de la Historia, mostrar monumentos emblemáticos, entre otros muchos recursos, a coste cero.

Los procedimientos utilizados no suponen un esfuerzo excesivo para los docentes, ya que, con ciertas nociones básicas de informática a las que hoy día es relativamente fácil acceder, junto al uso de aplicaciones también gratuitas y de fácil acceso en la red, podemos manipular las escenas de RA que encontramos en los repositorios e incluso crear aquellas que nos interesen. No obstante, somos conscientes que es imprescindible una mayor incidencia en la capacitación y perfeccionamiento en TIC en la formación inicial de los

maestros. En este sentido, no es de extrañar que más de la mitad de los encuestados manifieste una necesidad de formación inicial en esta herramienta.

Las respuestas obtenidas desde un planteamiento cualitativo van en línea con la disposición de los encuestados hacia las TIC en educación. Los resultados son satisfactorios por el grado de novedad, implicación, motivación y desafío que la instrumentalización educativa de la RA supone para los estudiantes. Todos han coincidido en señalar que se trata de un buen recurso para presentar y explicar los contenidos curriculares de Ciencias Sociales de manera atractiva, innovadora y motivadora en cualquier nivel educativo, destacando las numerosas alternativas que aporta para favorecer un aprendizaje interactivo en los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje y que han experimentado por sí mismos. Si bien, existen algunas reticencias hacia la RA derivada de una falta de conocimiento y de una integración en el aula como recurso TIC de primer orden. No obstante, consideramos que es cuestión de tiempo la inclusión de esta tecnología en las aulas a través de diferentes recursos como los Ar-Books, MagicBook o WonderBooks, iPads, Tablets o cascos y gafas de Realidad Aumentada.

Todavía faltan estudios y experiencias que sirvan como punto de partida para demostrar ampliamente los beneficios didácticos de la RA destacando cuál es el nivel más adecuado para conseguir mejores resultados dependiendo de los contenidos a tratar, del nivel del alumnado o del grado de conocimiento y uso que hacen de las TIC en general.

Es positivo ser innovador, incorporar las novedades a nuestras aulas, pero sin perder de vista que la mera incorporación de lo novedoso no lleva parejo el éxito del proceso educativo. Es preciso tener en cuenta a qué tipo de alumnado nos dirigimos y qué objetivos concretos son los que pretendemos alcanzar al introducir en nuestra docencia estos elementos virtuales, para que no dejen de ser un medio y se conviertan en el fin. Para ello, es conveniente que las innovaciones tecnológicas se introduzcan en las aulas junto a un planteamiento didáctico y disciplinar adecuado. Es nuestra responsabilidad como docentes formar a nuestros alumnos en el uso pedagógico y disciplinar de estas tecnologías emergentes, para que se enfrenten en igualdad de condiciones a sus alumnos en su futura práctica docente.

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Plataforma educativa ZERA: modelo de adaptación de contenidos sensible al contexto

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Resumen

El creciente auge de las tecnologías móviles y su incorporación en la educación han provocado un impacto en los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje, dando lugar a un nuevo paradigma denominado m-learning. Debido a la diversidad de dispositivos móviles, la mayoría de los recursos educativos diseñados para estaciones de trabajo convencionales no son apropiados para redes de ancho de banda pequeño y dispositivos con limitación de recursos y procesamiento, afectado además por la diversidad de dispositivos. La adaptación de contenidos a las capacidades de los dispositivos es una técnica muy utilizada en los últimos años. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo realizar una revisión del estado del arte en cuanto a la adaptación de contenidos según el contexto de los usuarios. Se describen las principales técnicas de inteligencia artificial aplicadas en este campo, profundizando en algoritmos para crear contenidos adaptados al contexto de los estudiantes de forma dinámica. Se concluye con la representación de un modelo personalizado a la plataforma educativa ZERA, desarrollada en la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas. El modelo propone dos capas de adaptación e incorpora un motor de adaptación ajustado a las 30 tipologías de recursos gestionados en la plataforma ZERA, la adaptación tiene en cuenta las preferencias de los usuarios, el contexto del usuario y los contenidos ajustados al estilo de aprendizaje del estudiante. Este proceso permite que ZERA pueda incorporarse al paradigma m-learning.

Palabras clave

M-learning, adaptación de contenidos, adaptación sensible al contexto

Educative platform ZERA: adaptation model context-aware content

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Abstract

The increasing rise of mobile technologies and their incorporation in education have caused an impact on the teaching and learning, leading to a new paradigm called m-learning. Because of the diversity of mobile devices, most educational resources designed for conventional work stations are not appropriate for networks and small bandwidth devices with limited resources and processing also affect the diversity of devices. The adaptation of content to the capabilities of the devices is a widely used technique in recent years. This paper aims to conduct a review of the state of the art regarding the adaptation of content according to the user context. The main artificial intelligence techniques applied in this field are described, deepening algorithms to create content tailored to the context of students dynamically. It concludes with the representation of a custom model to ZERA educational platform, developed at the University of Information Sciences. The model proposes two adaptation layers and incorporates an adaptive engine fitted to the 30 types of managed in ZERA platform, adaptation takes into account user preferences, user context and content adjusted to the learning style student. This process allows ZERA can join the m-learning paradigm.

Keywords

M-learning, content adaptation, context-aware content

I. Introducción

Las tecnologías móviles ofrecen nuevas oportunidades para el aprendizaje, extendiéndolo más allá de la tradicional "aula de clases". Los avances en los dispositivos móviles y las tecnologías inalámbricas han impactado en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje, este ha sabido aprovechar estos cambios dando lugar al aprendizaje móvil (m-learning).

En relación al término m-learning existe un amplio debate entre los investigadores (Pinkwart, Hoppe, Milrad, & Perez, 2003), (Tsvetozar Georgiev, Georgieva, & Smrikarov, 2004), (Traxler, 2005), (T. Georgiev, Georgieva, & Trajkovski, 2006), (Caudill, 2007), entre otros. Los debates se centran principalmente en si el m-learning es el siguiente paso del e-learning, o si es una herramienta avanzada que se integra con el e-learning; en cualquiera de los casos es considerado un nuevo componente que ha surgido para apoyar la educación a distancia.

Las Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones (TIC) y su influencia en la educación, han creado herramientas y plataformas educativas que apoyan y facilitan el seguimiento del proceso enseñanza - aprendizaje como son: Content Management Systems (CMS), Learning Management Systems (LMS), Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS), repositorios de recursos educativos, herramientas de autor, entre otras.

Debido a la diversidad de dispositivos móviles, la mayoría de los recursos educativos diseñados para las plataformas educativas, computadores convencionales y alta velocidad de conexión, no son apropiados para redes de ancho de banda pequeño y dispositivos con limitación de recursos y procesamiento. Esto hace necesaria la adaptación de los contenidos (adaptive content delivery).

(Zhao, 2010) define que el proceso de adaptación de contenidos es la acción de transformarlos y adaptarlos a las capacidades de los dispositivos. La adaptación es aplicada principalmente a dispositivos móviles, estos requieren un trato especial debido a las limitaciones de procesamiento, tamaño de pantalla y las distintas formas de entradas de datos.

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo realizar una revisión del estado del arte en cuanto a la adaptación de contenidos según el contexto de los usuarios. Se describen las principales técnicas de inteligencia artificial aplicadas en este campo, profundizando en algoritmos para crear contenidos adaptados al contexto de los estudiantes de forma dinámica. Se concluye con la representación de un modelo personalizado a la plataforma educativa ZERA, desarrollada en la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas.

II. Adaptación en el e-learning

La adaptación en el e-learning surge de la idea de que no hay un único estilo de aprendizaje que se ajuste a todos los tipos de estudiantes y a sus formas de aprendizaje. Dos enfoques se han introducido en esta área y el desafío de los sistemas adaptativos es el equilibrio entre estas dos diferentes formas de adaptación (Yaghmaie & Bahreininejad, 2011): (1) adaptabilidad, que se refiere a la medida en que el sistema cambia basado en un cierto conocimiento sobre el estudiante y (2) la capacidad de adaptación, que es cómo el sistema

se adapta en respuesta al contexto donde se encuentre el usuario. El primero es controlado por el sistema, mientras que el último es controlado por los estudiantes.

En la actualidad, el éxito de los sistemas de adaptación e-learning se ve en la prestación eficiente de los cursos por medio de técnicas avanzadas de personalización. Además, expertos de diferentes disciplinas de investigación coinciden en que la personalización es necesaria en entornos e-learning (Barrios, 2007): *“en las nuevas formas de enseñanza y paradigmas de aprendizaje los diferentes objetivos de aprendizaje requieren diferentes enfoques didácticos”*. Por lo tanto se puede decir que uno de los principales problemas técnicos de la adaptación en el e-learning es: ¿cómo lograr una adaptación que aunque cambie el enfoque didáctico de los contenidos logre los resultados esperados para los que estos fueron creados?

III. Adaptación de contenidos

En los modelos de adaptación de contenidos existen dos elementos fundamentales: los usuarios y los contenidos educativos (Gómez, Huerva, Mejía, Baldiris, & Fabregat, 2009). Es muy importante tener estos contenidos adaptado al contexto de los usuarios. (Dey, 2001) Define al contexto como: *“cualquier información que pueda ser usada para caracterizar la situación de una entidad, una entidad es una persona, lugar u objeto que sea considerado relevante en la interacción del usuario con la aplicación, incluye el lugar, tiempo, actividades y las preferencias de cada entidad”*. Para lograr esto es necesaria una serie de variables importantes. La inclusión del contexto en el momento de mostrarle a los usuarios (estudiantes y profesores) el contenido de los cursos diseñados en alguna plataforma educativa crea un nuevo modelo conocido como “adaptación sensible al contexto” (context-aware adaptation).

Un sistema es sensible al contexto si es capaz de usar la información que rodea al usuario para brindarle una mejor experiencia de trabajo, en el caso de una plataforma educativa se puede decir que es “sensible al contexto” si adapta los cursos, contenidos y recursos que este tenga a las condiciones del estudiante o/y profesor, permitiéndole un aprendizaje óptimo.

En el caso de la adaptación de contenidos realizada para llevar los cursos de las plataformas educativas a dispositivos móviles como parte del contexto hay que tener en cuenta: las limitaciones de procesamiento, tamaño de pantalla, las distintas formas de entradas de datos, los tipos de ficheros que permite, el sistema operativo que usa y los sensores. Por lo tanto, conociendo el contexto de los estudiantes y proveyendo los recursos educativos ideales en función de estos mejorará la eficiencia del m-learning.

Es importante destacar que la adaptación se puede realizar en varios niveles (M, 2012): adaptación a nivel de presentación, adaptación a nivel de contenido y la creación de la ruta de aprendizaje adaptativo.

IV. Técnicas para la adaptación de contenidos

Una forma de llevar a cabo la adaptación de contenidos y lograr a su vez una mayor satisfacción por parte de los usuarios es la creación de diferentes contextualizaciones de los

contenidos según el tipo de usuario, su contexto y sus preferencias, pero es conocido los altos costos que implica el diseño de recursos educativos, de ahí que tener diferentes versiones de los mismos resulte complejo.

En el campo de la inteligencia artificial existen alternativas que brindan grandes beneficios en estos procesos de adaptar los contenidos según las preferencias de los usuarios, tal es el caso del uso de: redes neuronales (Schalkoff, 1997), minería de datos (Fayyad, Piatetsky-shapiro, & Smyth, 1996) y reconocimiento de patrones (Luis & Calonge Cano, 2011).

En la literatura existen varios casos interesantes que usan "optimización basada en colonias de hormigas". (M, 2012) Utiliza esta técnica para lograr alcanzar un camino óptimo de aprendizaje adaptativo reduciendo la sobrecarga cognitiva, así como la desorientación de los estudiantes. Además plantean que los atributos de los recursos educativos, junto con las características del estudiante, mejora la prestación de la mayoría de los recursos.

Para mejorar la capacidad de adaptación (M, 2012) plantea la importancia de añadir las características del estudiante. Para ello se propone como atributo de la hormiga la combinación del modelo de estilo de aprendizaje de Kolb (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), el nivel de conocimiento del estudiante y sus preferencias con los atributos de los objetos de aprendizaje, esto hará el sistema de aprendizaje más adaptable a los estudiantes de manera individual.

En (Sargsyan, Hovakimyan, & Barkhudaryan, 2011) se plantea el uso de un "algoritmo genético" para resolver el problema de la gestión óptima del proceso de enseñanza en los sistemas de e-learning, plantean la construcción de una herramienta que adapta los materiales de enseñanza para un usuario, lo que permitirá al estudiante obtener los conocimientos de manera efectiva.

Los agentes inteligentes tienen un protagonismo en este campo, un ejemplo de esto es el denominado "Learning Assistant" que según (Kwasnicka, Szul, Markowska-Kaczmar, & Myszkowski, 2008) es capaz de definir diferentes caminos de aprendizaje en un sistema e-learning para diferentes estudiantes. Este agente es capaz de inferir utilizando los metadatos que describen a los estudiantes y los materiales didácticos. Se utiliza una red neuronal para agrupar a los estudiantes similares, además se expone como se debe hacer la personalización considerando las características individuales y de los grupos similares de estudiantes.

Existen estrategias para la adaptación de contenidos en plataformas educativas, enunciadas en (MobiForge, 2009): One Size Fits All, Minor Adaptation, Redirection y Unified. Según la estrategia utilizada la adaptación puede ser estática o dinámica (Rho, Cho, & Hwang, 2005). Si la adaptación del contenido es estática, el servidor analiza la petición y devuelve los contenidos que este ya tenga pre-adaptados (Chang et al., 2008), de lo contrario si la adaptación es dinámica esta se realiza en el momento en que la petición llega al servidor, devolviendo los contenidos adaptados a las características del dispositivo (Lum & Lau, 2003) (Sharples, 2006).

También existen estrategias para crear sistemas adaptativos que personalizan el contenido de estos teniendo en cuenta los dispositivos móviles y sus características, tal es el caso de (Zhao, Anma, Ninomiya, & Okamoto, 2008) que presenta una arquitectura funcional para la adaptación de contenidos, así como algoritmos para crear contenidos adaptados al contexto

de los estudiantes de forma dinámica. También se puede encontrar en (Rho, et al., 2005) una arquitectura, un motor de adaptación y un prototipo funcional para mostrar el contenido multimedia de manera adaptativa asegurando la calidad en su entrega a través de conexiones alámbricas e inalámbricas

Todas estas técnicas combinadas a soluciones algorítmicas existentes para adaptar los contenidos a dispositivos móviles, en dependencia del tipo de dispositivo, permiten dar un salto en el aprendizaje a distancia y sobre todo en el m-learning, poniendo a disposición de profesores y estudiantes herramientas que pueden ser utilizadas en cualquier momento y lugar. Esto es un ejemplo fiel a la definición de educación a distancia, solo que deben ser incorporados aspectos pedagógicos y didácticos novedosos que realmente aproveche las facilidades que brindan las tecnologías.

V. Modelo adaptación de contenidos para la plataforma educativa ZERA

La plataforma educativa ZERA se encuentra en la versión 1.0, es un LCMS creado en la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas, entre las características que hacen de esta plataforma única se tiene: que es basada en hiper-entornos de aprendizajes; permite la creación de cursos con una estructura capitular donde el contenido se muestra con la estructura de un libro: avance del contenido (marcador de libro), resaltado, apuntes al contenido; creación de 30 tipos de recursos y 11 tipologías de ejercicios; soporte para las especificaciones IMS-QTI y SCORM; incorpora las sugerencias de uso y registro de avance; la evaluación por rúbricas y por competencias; atención diferenciada (recorridos dirigidos, softareas, orientaciones de trabajos); sistema distribuido ideal para instituciones con problemas de conectividad y los procesos comunes de la gestión académica y herramientas de comunicación fórum, chat, entre otras funcionalidades.

ZERA debido a sus características puede ser utilizada tanto en Cuba como en otros países. Sin embargo, en su concepción no se tuvo en cuenta la adaptabilidad de sus contenidos, ni su uso en un entorno m-learning, por lo que se hace necesario incluir en las futuras versiones una arquitectura que provea a esta plataforma de una adaptación de los contenidos sensible al contexto de cada usuario, sobre todo de los usuarios que se conecten con dispositivos móviles.

Se propone desarrollar las tres capas de adaptación enunciadas en (M, 2012) e incidir en la capa de presentación y en la capa de contenidos en la plataforma educativa ZERA. En el caso de la capa de presentación se utilizará una estrategia de One Size Fits All, en esta capa se cambiará el diseño y los componentes visuales para que desde computadoras de escritorio como de dispositivos móviles se tenga la misma experiencia de usuario, esto implica cambiar las tecnologías, lenguajes y requerimientos del lado del cliente.

En la versión actual se usa como tecnologías y lenguajes del lado del cliente: XHTML (W3C, 2010), JQuery 1.5 (Bibeault, Katz, & Rosa, 2014) y el framework de CSS Blueprint 1.0 (Blueprint, 2011). La propuesta de cambios para la capa de presentación consiste en usar HTML5 (W3C, 2014), JQuery 1.9 y el cambio más importante estaría en el uso del framework de CSS Twitter Bootstrap 2.3 (Otto & Jacob, 2013), esto permite crear diseños adaptativos que junto al uso de media queries (W3C, 2012) se logra que la plataforma se visualice

correctamente desde cualquier navegador web y dispositivo. Los cambios en esta capa aunque ayudan en la visualización de los contenidos y recursos de la plataforma no los adaptan al contexto de los usuarios, por lo que es necesario un cambio en su arquitectura.

Para lograr la adaptación en la capa de contenidos se propone usar una adaptación dinámica del lado del servidor, cuando la petición de un contenido se realice al servidor este analizará el contexto de la petición y junto a los cambios realizados en la capa de presentación devolverá a los clientes (usuarios) los contenidos adaptados. La propuesta de adaptación consiste en darle a la capa de negocio de la plataforma la responsabilidad de mediar y tomar la responsabilidad de pasarle los datos de entrada al motor de adaptación, estos datos de entradas están formados por: las preferencias del usuario, los contenidos a adaptar y el contexto del usuario.

- *Preferencias de los usuarios:* está dado por configuraciones previas que ha realizado el estudiante en su proceso de registro y a un test que este realiza al entrar al sistema por primera vez, algunos de estos datos están relacionados con notificaciones preferidas y sistemas de mensajería; además el sistema según el estudiante interactúa con este registra su ritmo de aprendizaje, temas dominados y temas por dominar, gustos, interacciones sociales, comportamiento y motivaciones.
- *Contenidos a adaptar:* para la selección de los contenidos a adaptar se tiene en cuenta un Modelo para la Planificación Inteligente de Contenidos (MPIC) basado en la secuenciación del curriculum mediante un algoritmo de optimización de colonias de hormigas. El objetivo de este modelo es la planificación inteligente de recursos educativos teniendo en cuenta las preferencias del estudiante y sus características. Este modelo se basa en el test realizado previamente que permite determinar las características de cada estudiante y también tiene en cuenta sus resultados en actividades de aprendizaje desarrolladas según interactúa con la plataforma. Este modelo es el resultado de una investigación doctoral que se encuentra en desarrollo y que se ajusta a la plataforma educativa ZERA, pero desarrollado por la autora Lisandra Guibert Estrada durante el presente año, por lo que no será tratado en este artículo. La salida de este modelo provee la ruta de aprendizaje personalizada del estudiante y los contenidos que se ajustan al tipo de aprendizaje del estudiante que serán la entrada a al motor de adaptación de contenidos para adaptarlos al contexto del usuario.
- *Contexto:* está dado por las características de cada dispositivo: las limitaciones de procesamiento, tamaño de pantalla, las distintas formas de entradas de datos, los tipos de ficheros que permite, el sistema operativo que usa y los sensores.

En el caso de que ya existan guardados en memoria los contenidos adaptados para una petición se devolverán estos y no se tendrá que ejecutar el proceso de adaptación, la respuesta del motor de adaptación será enviada a la capa de negocio, esta a su vez a la capa de presentación o de servicio y de esta al usuario. Cuando se plantea el acceso desde un dispositivo móvil se refiere a una aplicación nativa denominada XauceMovil perteneciente a la plataforma ZERA y desde un navegador web puede ser desde cualquier dispositivo que posea esta aplicación (navegador web). Para una mejor comprensión ver la figura 1.

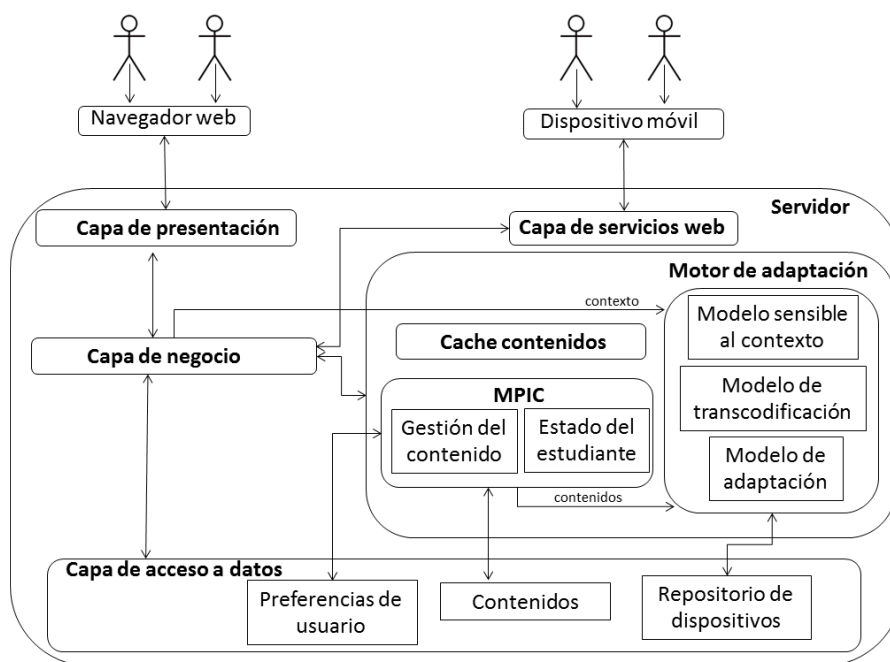


Figura 1. Arquitectura para la adaptación de contenidos sensible al contexto en ZERA

Para la creación del motor de adaptación se tiene las bases de la arquitectura desarrollada por (Zhao, 2010). Esta arquitectura provee los algoritmos y métodos para adaptar 4 tipos de recursos: texto, imagen, audio y video; sin embargo la plataforma educativa ZERA gestiona 30 tipos de recursos (incluye los 4 anteriores) por lo que hay que agregar los algoritmos y modificaciones necesarias al motor de adaptación de (Zhao, 2010) que permitan la adaptación de los 26 tipos de recursos restantes.

La inclusión de este proceso en ZERA permitirá que los contenidos almacenados se le visualicen al estudiante en cualquier tipo de dispositivo y a la vez teniendo en cuenta sus preferencias y estilos de aprendizaje.

VI. Conclusiones

El análisis del estado del arte desarrollado en el presente artículo permitió arribar a las siguientes conclusiones:

1. La adaptación de contenidos es una rama de la ciencia en el campo de las tecnologías móviles, que aparejado a la diversidad de dispositivos de este tipo, tienen un alto impacto en las investigaciones relacionadas con el campo de la ubicuidad en la educación.
2. Las técnicas de inteligencia artificial como: optimización por colonias de hormigas, algoritmos genéticos y agentes inteligentes son de amplia utilización en la adaptación de contenidos para dispositivos móviles.
3. El diseño de un modelo de adaptación de contenidos ajustado al contexto de los usuarios de forma dinámica, personalizado a la plataforma educativa ZERA, utilizando un motor de adaptación de contenidos ajustado a las 30 tipologías de recursos educativos de la plataforma, permite su inclusión en el paradigma m-learning, con posibilidades de brindar cursos a distancia a través de las tecnologías emergentes.

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Implementación de los Planes de Mejora en el Contexto de la Ley Subvención Escolar Preferencial (Sep)

Utilización de Estrategias y Recursos Didácticos Incorporados en el Plan de Mejoramiento en las Asignaturas de Lenguaje y Matemática en una Escuela Municipal de Punta Arenas

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Resumen

El acceso a los recursos didácticos y la forma cómo estos recursos se aplican en el aula a las distintas experiencias de aprendizaje escolar proporcionan evidencias para mejorar las prácticas pedagógicas en el aula. Este estudio exploratorio buscó, en un sentido amplio, identificar los recursos didácticos que se han adquirido a través de la Ley SEP y que han sido incorporados en el plan de mejoramiento, como también las estrategias metodológicas utilizadas por los docentes. Para ello, se utilizaron los siguientes instrumentos para recolectar información, cuestionarios, grupo focal, tanto para docentes como directivos y entrevistas al equipo directivo. Los resultados del estudio revelan el conocimiento y la implementación permanente de los recursos didácticos, particularmente, de la pizarra digital interactiva. Asimismo, la variedad de estrategias metodológicas son apropiadas a las necesidades e intereses de los educandos y se implementan habitualmente en el aula de una escuela municipal de Punta Arenas.

Palabras clave

Ley SEP, Recursos didácticos, Estrategias metodológicas, Plan de Mejoramiento, Pizarra Digital Interactiva

Implementation of Improvement Plans in the Context of the Preferential School Subsidy Law (PSS Law)

Utilization of Strategies and Didactic Resources incorporated in the Improvement Plan in the subjects of Language and Mathematics in a Municipal School in Punta Arenas

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Abstract

The access to the didactic resources and how these resources are applied to the different learning experiences in the classroom, provide evidence to improve educational practices at school. In a broad sense, this exploratory study attempted to identify the educational resources, that have been acquired through the PSS Law and have also been incorporated in the improvement plan, as well as the methodological strategies used by teachers. To this end, the following instruments were used to collect information, questionnaires and focus group, both for teachers and headmasters and interviews with the school leadership team. The results of the study reveal the knowledge and permanent implementation of didactic resources, in particular, of the interactive whiteboard. Similarly, the variety of methodological strategies is appropriate to the needs and interests of learners and is usually implemented in the classroom of a municipal school in Punta Arenas.

Keywords

PSS Law, Didactic Resources, Methodological Strategies, Improvement Plan, Interactive Whiteboard

I. Introducción

La presente investigación se desarrolló en la comuna de Punta Arenas, Región de Magallanes y Antártica Chilena (XII región), donde se ubica la Corporación Municipal de Punta Arenas, institución que administra el sistema educativo municipal y que actualmente atiende a un 55,44% de la población total en edad escolar. La Corporación cuenta con 19 escuelas de educación básica (100%) adscritas a la Ley SEP. No obstante, el restante 44,56% se distribuye entre la educación particular subvencionada y particular pagada.

Por lo anteriormente expuesto, esta investigación se enmarca en el área de Gestión Curricular, fundamentalmente en el ámbito de Planificación de la Enseñanza, puesto que pretende identificar los recursos didácticos que se han adquirido a través de la Ley Subvención Escolar Preferencial y que han sido incorporados en el Plan de Mejoramiento, desde la percepción de sus propios actores –directivos, docentes, alumnos y apoderados. De la misma forma, se espera establecer su pertinencia con las estrategias metodológicas más utilizadas por los docentes en las asignaturas de Lenguaje y Matemática de la escuela de la comuna de Punta Arenas.

La importancia de llevar a cabo una investigación en el ámbito de la metodología educacional teniendo como base el conocimiento de las estrategias metodológicas y los recursos de aprendizaje que se utilizan en el establecimiento responde, esencialmente, a la necesidad de la escuela de obtener un insumo para la toma de decisiones en el área de gestión curricular.

La metodología del estudio combina técnicas cuantitativas como cualitativas. Inicialmente se aplica una encuesta para conocer la percepción a docentes, directivos, estudiantes y apoderados. En términos cualitativos se incluyen entrevistas y grupos focales con la finalidad de profundizar en los datos obtenidos a través de la encuesta.

La investigación se plantea con la finalidad de obtener información acerca de la forma cómo se utilizan estos recursos en los procesos de aprendizajes. Adicionalmente se integrará como insumo a la evaluación global de la implementación del plan de mejoramiento.

II. Contexto teórico a partir del cual se aborda el problema

La presente investigación se centra en dos ámbitos del modelo de gestión de la Ley SEP, que forman parte del Plan de Mejoramiento Educativo 2008 – 2012 (PME), de una escuela municipal en Punta Arenas; En relación a los recursos utilizados y como se utilizan, esto es:

- Gestión Curricular: Contempla diseño, implementación y evaluación de su propuesta curricular. Hace hincapié en medir los avances en el aprendizaje de los alumnos, mejorar las estrategias de enseñanza y apoyar la gestión docente en el aula. Las acciones comprometidas apuntan a una sustentabilidad de la propuesta y estar alineadas al Modelo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Gestión Escolar.
- Gestión de Recursos: Los lineamientos en esta área se centran en la organización y la optimización de los recursos con que cuenta el establecimiento. Además de tener presente el desarrollo profesional de los docentes, y asistentes de la educación.

a. Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial

Diversos estudios han planteado que entre los variados problemas evidenciados en nuestro sistema educacional, se destaca la administración y distribución de recursos a los establecimientos educacionales subvencionados. Además se establece una distinción entre necesidades de los estudiantes con respecto a la situación económica y a su capital cultural de origen, acentuando la estratificación del sistema escolar. "Es suficientemente extendida la evidencia que demuestra que un niño o joven proveniente de hogares de menores recursos tiene, en promedio, un rendimiento educativo inferior a un estudiante de hogares de mayores recursos. Este resultado es independiente, en principio, de la calidad del establecimiento"(Beyer, 2008: 185). Para solucionar esta problemática surge la Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial (Ley N°20.248), más conocida por su sigla como "Ley SEP", que busca compensar las desigualdades educativas e implica una inversión significativa de recursos financieros, sobre todo para los establecimientos educacionales que cuentan con un número alto de estudiantes vulnerables en sus aulas. Esta experiencia innovadora en términos del sistema de financiamiento tiene como objetivo mejorar la calidad de la educación en los establecimientos subvencionados, básicamente a través de la entrega de una subvención adicional a estudiantes identificados como prioritarios.

La decisión de asignar recursos adicionales a la subvención SEP se sustenta en los siguientes principios:

- Todos los alumnos pueden alcanzar altos niveles de aprendizaje. No obstante, en los niños de estratos socioeconómicos bajos es más difícil, por lo que debe existir un financiamiento diferenciado según el nivel socioeconómico de los alumnos.
- Los incentivos son importantes. Deben existir apoyo y sanciones hacia aquellos establecimientos que no logran los resultados esperados.
- Recursos orientados al logro de los aprendizajes a través de los Planes de Mejoramiento Educativo (PME).

Uno de los elementos más importantes de la Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial lo constituye la obligatoriedad de diseñar e implementar un plan de mejoramiento poniendo énfasis en un liderazgo pedagógico, en base a un diagnóstico institucional de la situación inicial. Este plan de mejoramiento cuenta con recursos económicos asignados en forma estratégica, siendo este un aspecto clave y motivador para alcanzar las metas educativas. Además, tiene como objetivo operacionalizar una estrategia de desarrollo orientado al establecimiento educacional, a un mejoramiento continuo, con una duración de cuatro años, para lograr las metas propuestas.

Además la Ley SEP introduce cambios significativos en cuanto a la relación MINEDUC y establecimientos educativos, siendo los más relevantes: (i) la magnitud sin precedentes del aumento de los recursos de libre disponibilidad que se inyectan en el sistema educativo; (ii) la descentralización de las decisiones más críticas respecto de las acciones para mejorar los procesos y resultados, dando facultades a las escuelas y a los sostenedores; (iii) la institucionalización de la asistencia técnica proporcionada por personas o agencias externas al sistema educativo como política de gobierno para el mejoramiento educativo en las escuelas y (iv) la introducción de mecanismos de rendición de cuentas mediante el establecimiento de metas y -lo que es más importante por su novedad en el sistema educativo chileno- la definición de consecuencias por el incumplimiento de los

compromisos (Viola Espínola & Silva, 2009). La Ley SEP da a los establecimientos educacionales una mayor autonomía, respetando los principios de calidad y equidad, en un contexto de mejoramiento continuo donde las instituciones se responsabilizan por sus resultados.

En primera instancia, el Ministerio de Educación invita a los establecimientos educacionales a participar en la Ley Sep. Una vez confirmada su participación, el Ministerio de Educación clasifica las escuelas en tres categorías:

- *Autónomas*: Aquéllas que han mostrado sistemáticamente buenos resultados educativos en la prueba Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación, en las tres últimas mediciones dentro de su grupo socioeconómico.
- *Emergentes*: Aquéllas que no han mostrado sistemáticamente buenos resultados educativos. Tienen un puntaje SIMCE promedio por debajo de la media de su mismo grupo socioeconómico.
- En *Recuperación*: Aquéllas que han mostrado resultados educativos reiteradamente deficientes. Un SIMCE por debajo de los 220 puntos. También se clasifican en esta categoría las escuelas emergentes que no cuenten con el PM-SEP dentro del plazo de 1 año y aquéllas que, teniendo su plan aprobado, no lo apliquen. (Guía Ayuda Mineduc, según Decreto N° 293, Julio 2011)

Esta clasificación es clave para focalizar los sistemas de apoyo hacia las escuelas según su clasificación. Para realizar esta gran tarea, es importante contar con docentes comprometidos y competentes; en esencia lo importante es "la cultura de organización para promover la mejora" (Ainscow & West, 2008:40) creando un ambiente donde los profesores atiendan de buena manera las sugerencias para la mejora de su establecimiento y sientan que los conocimientos e ideas presentes en la organización, son la base de los procesos de mejora que van a llevar adelante.

De esta forma, la Ley SEP implica un cambio radical en la gestión de los diferentes actores. Se les entrega a los sostenedores y establecimientos mayor autonomía en la gestión de los recursos y se insta a los establecimientos a responsabilizarse por los resultados de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. El trabajo, en este nuevo escenario se enfoca en las áreas curriculares de mayor déficit, como por ejemplo: Lenguaje y Matemáticas. Esto es coincidente con investigaciones que "giran en torno a un foco continuo en la docencia nuclear, primero en la lectoescritura y luego en las matemáticas; grandes inversiones en el desarrollo profesional de profesores y directores, muy orientado a aspectos fundamentales de la práctica docente en aula; una rendición de cuentas explícita y exigente por la calidad de la práctica docente y el nivel de desempeño de los alumnos, respaldada por una supervisión directa de las prácticas docentes en aula por parte de los directores y el personal del distrito; y un clima normativo en el que los adultos se hacen responsables por su propio aprendizaje, el de sus colegas y de sus estudiantes" (Elmore, 2010:135).

Así, tanto las prácticas pedagógicas como de gestión, tienen que focalizarse en crear, desarrollar e implementar instancias de trabajo y aprendizaje colaborativo; donde profesores y directivos se involucren de manera sistemática en el análisis, monitoreo y comprensión de lo que sucede con las prácticas en el aula, como también en la institución.

b. Política de Mejoramiento Educativo

En este punto llama la atención que, a pesar de los esfuerzos y de la inversión realizada en la última década en Chile, los resultados de la enseñanza primaria aún son deficientes. Lo anterior es complejo, ya que se han destinado importantes recursos al sistema educativo, como también grandes reformas se han implementado en el sector. Sin embargo, los indicadores de rendimiento se han mantenido prácticamente inalterados. Entonces "¿Por qué a pesar de todos los esfuerzos e inversiones realizadas, el sistema educativo no ha logrado constituirse en una fuente de desarrollo y de distribución equitativa de las oportunidades?" (Raczynsky & Muñoz, 2007:1). Por el contrario, el origen socioeconómico y el capital cultural siguen siendo predictores en los resultados de evaluaciones estandarizadas como el SIMCE.

De esta manera, el Ministerio de Educación está haciendo un esfuerzo sostenido en todo el sistema escolar para consolidar los procesos de gestión al interior de los establecimientos escolares subvencionados. Es así, que considerando su experiencia y las investigaciones realizadas en el campo de la gestión escolar, se ha desarrollado el Modelo de Calidad de la Gestión Escolar, el que apunta a generar las capacidades necesarias para que cada escuela se transforme en un centro efectivo y de calidad, a partir de su propia identidad, asumiendo que cambiar las prácticas de docentes y/o de directivos no es simple y no pasa por la voluntad de los actores, sino por las capacidades que ellos tienen, las que muchas veces deben ser creadas e instaladas. El aseguramiento de la calidad, se ha materializado, por ejemplo, en el ámbito de la educación superior, a través de los programas de acreditación, en el ámbito docente con el "Marco para la Buena Enseñanza", en lo referido al desempeño de los directivos docentes con el "Marco para la Buena Dirección" y en el ámbito de la gestión institucional escolar a través del "Sistema de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Gestión Escolar", que se desarrolla en torno a un modelo de calidad.

En este contexto, el plan de mejora por si mismo, no asegura el cambio ni el mejoramiento, ya que "el cambio en educación es fácil de proponer, complicado de llevar a la práctica y extraordinariamente difícil de sostener" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008: 7), pero el plan lo encauza. Además, hay que tener presente que las estrategias de mejoramiento que son efectivas para algunas escuelas no lo son para otras. Las instituciones educativas progresan a ritmos diferentes. De ahí "la importancia de concebir estrategias diferenciadas de mejoramiento de las escuelas" (Hopkins & Higham, 2008: 107). Por tal motivo, es fundamental un buen liderazgo en la escuela para hacer sostenible los procesos de mejora.

El plan de mejoramiento pone énfasis en el liderazgo pedagógico y en una mayor autonomía de los establecimientos respetando los principios de calidad y equidad, a través del cual se intenciona la gestión hacia una cultura del mejoramiento continuo y una responsabilidad por los resultados de la organización - escuela. Lo fundamental del plan de mejora es que responda a la diversidad del alumnado. En otras palabras, se orienta a tener un sistema educativo inclusivo, generando una vinculación más estrecha entre los esfuerzos de mejora institucional y los resultados de aprendizaje en el aula.

c. Estrategias Metodológicas

Las estrategias metodológicas constituyen el conjunto de acciones que utiliza el docente para orientar la enseñanza con el fin de promover el aprendizaje de sus alumnos. Se trata de

orientaciones generales acerca de cómo enseñar un contenido disciplinar considerando qué queremos que nuestros alumnos comprendan, por qué y para qué (Anijovich & Mora, 2009).

En el contexto de la utilización adecuada de estrategias metodológicas el Ministerio de Educación ha propuesto el documento: "Marco para la Buena Enseñanza", a través del cual, los docentes "conocen y seleccionan variadas estrategias metodológicas y... recursos de aprendizaje congruentes con la complejidad de los contenidos". Este instrumento se ha transformado en el marco regulador de la función docente, con la finalidad de orientarlo en los dominios y descriptores que guíen su accionar profesional.

El docente adapta y organiza estas estrategias metodológicas y recursos didácticos de acuerdo con las características individuales de cada alumno. Esta personalización de la enseñanza consiste en la selección de métodos de enseñanza en función del conocimiento previo del alumno. De esta forma, la propuesta del aprendizaje significativo de David Ausubel, por ejemplo, considera el aprender como un sinónimo de comprender (Carretero, 2005). Además establece que aquello que se comprenda, se recordará mejor. Aunque también dependerá de una predisposición favorable de parte del estudiante para incorporar los conocimientos nuevos con agrado y relacionarlos con los ya existentes. Ausubel propone considerar dos dimensiones: el aprendizaje del alumno y la estrategia de enseñanza, basada en el descubrimiento por el propio alumno.

Como señala Montenegro el rol docente, hoy en día, involucra, entre otros, tareas de diseño y creación de entornos y experiencias de aprendizaje, orientadas a elevar el conocimiento a niveles superiores a través de estrategias metodológicas que pueden expresarse (Montenegro, 2005), por ejemplo, en una mejor comprensión y una mejor actuación del estudiante frente a la realidad. En sentido general, una estrategia es una actitud constante que se mantiene a través de una serie de actividades y que busca a través de ellas el cumplimiento de un determinado objetivo. También se puede ver la estrategia como un conjunto de reglas para asegurar una buena decisión. En el ámbito pedagógico, la estrategia metodológica se refiere a un conjunto de actividades que por su organización, facilita la probabilidad de obtener un determinado logro.

Por otra parte, el principal problema de los docentes de la generación digital, es que la sociedad actual cambia muy rápidamente. Los profesores se han formado y continúan desarrollándose con una cultura y una visión del significado de su profesión que ya ha cambiado (Gros & Silva, 2005).

Por lo anterior, urge incorporar en los programas de formación inicial docente, una serie de elementos relacionados a la inserción de las TICs como herramienta de apoyo en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, que preparen a los educadores para los escenarios actuales y también para aquellos espacios que se prevén para el futuro, en el corto, mediano y largo plazo.

En efecto, los docentes tienen que aprender métodos y prácticas nuevas de enseñanza, conociendo cómo usar los métodos de evaluación apropiados para su nueva pedagogía y las tecnologías que sean más pertinentes. También deben poseer las capacidades que permitan a sus estudiantes usar las tecnologías en sus clases, ya que si bien la mayoría de ellos conocen las tecnologías, les faltan las habilidades para usarlas bien en clases. Se considera también relevante la Teoría de las Inteligencias Múltiples de Howard Gardner y su aplicación

en la práctica pedagógica puesto que “refuerza la idea de que hay diferentes maneras en que las personas aprenden, representan, procesan la información y comprenden el mundo que nos rodea” (Galindo & Galindo, 2011: 2). Gardner identifica aspectos variados de la cognición distinguiendo a personas que tienen diferentes fortalezas cognitivas y estilos de aprendizaje contrastantes. Esta es un mecanismo que nos permite entender las formas en que éstos aprenden con mayor facilidad y de este modo poder ayudarlos a ser más exitosos en otras áreas (Suazo, 2006). Esta teoría ha incrementado el interés particularmente para los profesores de cualquier nivel de enseñanza ya que propone capacidades de inteligencias autónomas que resultan en muchas formas diferentes de saber, comprender y aprender acerca del mundo que nos rodea.

Si se preguntara cuál es el mejor alumno de una clase, no sería fácil responder. ¿Por qué un estudiante es brillante en Matemática y más lento en Lenguaje o inglés, por ejemplo? La teoría de Gardner nos ofrece una respuesta a esta interrogante. Naturalmente, no debemos confundir los estilos de aprendizaje con las inteligencias múltiples. Los estilos pueden variar según la tarea, no así las inteligencias múltiples.

Recursos Didácticos

Los recursos didácticos representan un componente clave en la metodología y práctica pedagógica. La selección acertada y el buen uso que se le asigne a cada recurso, asegurará o no el éxito en el cumplimiento de los objetivos propuestos.

Al respecto, (Spiegel, 2008: 42) establece en su propuesta “Planificando Clases Interesantes” que “recurso didáctico es todo material que a partir de sus ventajas para el contexto en el que será utilizado, se convierte en instrumento para la composición en función de la necesidad del docente. Considerando que el quehacer docente ofrece variadas oportunidades orientadas al logro de aprendizajes significativos, es esencial la observación, exploración, análisis y reflexión del mejor aprovechamiento del material didáctico para un determinado contexto.

Investigadores como Charles F. Hoban, James D. Finn y Edgar Dale, (Spiegel, 2008) descubrieron que los medios y recursos didácticos tecnológicos pueden aportar ventajas al mejoramiento de los aprendizajes puesto que ofrecen una experiencia real que estimula la actividad por parte de los alumnos, desarrollan continuidad de pensamiento y enriquecen los significados. Despertando la motivación y creando un interés por el tema a desarrollar.

Por tanto, la utilización de recursos didácticos en la enseñanza tiene una doble misión: por un lado, mejorar el aprendizaje de los alumnos y por otro, crear condiciones para que profesores y educandos puedan interactuar dentro de un ambiente favorable, con el fin de conseguir los mejores resultados en el proceso de formación.

III. Diseño metodológico

El método de estudio a seguir es de corte cuantitativo ya que implica la recolección y el análisis de datos de los cuestionarios aplicados a profesores, directivos y apoderados en relación a los recursos y metodologías, para su posterior relación con variables a considerar.

De este modo, un mismo objeto de estudio es abordado desde diferentes perspectivas a fin de comparar datos.

Para este contexto, se opta por una investigación de tipo exploratorio, pues no existen estudios previos que permitan evidenciar que recursos se utilizan y como se utilizan en el aula. Posteriormente, el curso de la investigación adquirió un enfoque descriptivo transeccional para recolectar datos en un solo momento, a fin de observar el fenómeno tal y como se da en su contexto natural a través de la descripción exacta de los objetos, procesos y personas.

El estudio contempló las siguientes:

Exploratoria: Documental – Instrumentos y Técnicas de Recolección de Información

Para el levantamiento de la información se utilizaron las siguientes técnicas: el cuestionario y el grupo focal. En primera instancia se diseñaron instrumentos para los directivos, docentes en ejercicio, alumnos, y padres - apoderados de la escuela municipal de Punta Arenas. Estos cuestionarios abarcaron tres secciones; en tanto, el cuestionario de los docentes incluyó cuatro secciones. Las variables que sustentan el diseño de los cuestionarios son los recursos didácticos y las estrategias didácticas. En la primera sección se agregaron variables relacionadas a datos generales (género, edad, curso, años de experiencia, asignaturas que atiende); la segunda sección consistió en preguntas cerradas y abiertas, con el objetivo de obtener una valoración cualitativa en torno a las variables de estudio y contribuir al logro de los objetivos propuestos para esta investigación.

A partir de la necesidad de conocer las percepciones y respuestas grupales de los profesores en relación a la temática de estudio, se optó por utilizar el grupo focal a través de entrevistas colectivas semiestructuradas. Por lo tanto, a través de esta técnica se complementó la información entregada en el cuestionario.

a. Selección de la Muestra

Considerando las características de esta investigación, se optó por realizar un muestreo no probabilístico. Se utilizó una muestra de tipo estratificada que tuvo como finalidad incluir subgrupos con características similares a fin de estudiarlos a fondo. Nos referimos a los profesores jefes, profesores de asignaturas, directivos, alumnos y apoderados.

b. Distribución de la muestra

ACTORES	NÚMERO	PORCENTAJE
Directivos	3	3%
Docentes	31	27%
Apoderados	40	35%
Alumnos	40	35%

c. Análisis y Procesamiento de la Información

El proceso de análisis se realizó en base a los resultados del levantamiento de datos a través de los cuestionarios y grupos focales. Después de la recogida de datos a través de los cuestionarios mencionados, se dio inicio a la etapa de clasificación o agrupación de los datos referentes a cada variable objeto de estudio y su presentación conjunta. Durante este proceso se revisaron y depuraron los datos obtenidos. Posteriormente y con el propósito de facilitar la tabulación se codificaron las respuestas.

IV. Análisis e interpretación de resultados

Los indicadores de análisis responden a las categorías Recursos Didácticos y Estrategias metodológicas que se utilizan en el aula y el nivel de satisfacción respectivo, por parte de apoderados, alumnos y docentes de la escuela.

V. Resultados

El presente análisis corresponde a los resultados de la aplicación del cuestionario a los siguientes actores: directivos, docentes, alumnos y apoderados, como las entrevistas a los directivos y docentes.

Tanto los directivos como los docentes del establecimiento, coinciden en que las capacitaciones se realizan de acuerdo a las necesidades pedagógicas del alumnado, como del interés de los profesores.

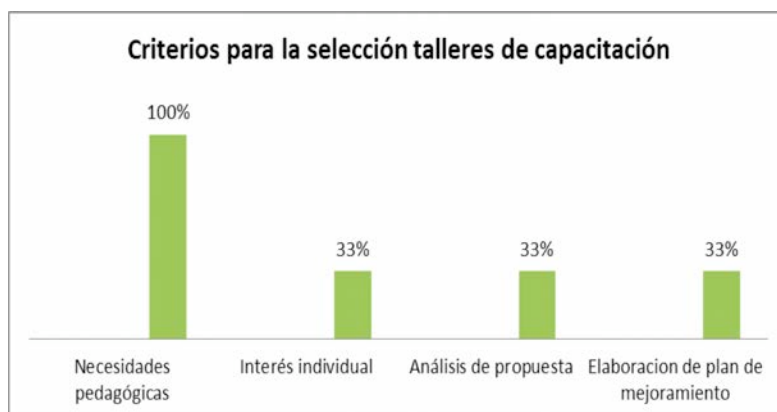


Gráfico 1. Criterios para la selección talleres de capacitación

Según los entrevistados este mismo criterio se utiliza también para la adquisición de recursos.

El 65% de los encuestados indica que las reuniones con UTP y los consejos de profesores son las instancias donde se reflexiona sobre la utilización de los recursos didácticos y la forma como estos recursos se aprovechan en el aula.



Gráfico 2. Instancias de reflexión sobre la utilización de recursos y estrategias

También se mencionan otras que son informales como las conversaciones con la UTP y profesores, en los tiempos “libres” que tienen en común.

Un 65% de los docentes afirman que los recursos utilizados sí se adaptan a los intereses de los alumnos. Sin embargo, un 6% defiende y reconoce una adaptación ocasional, mientras que un 23% de los docentes no responde.

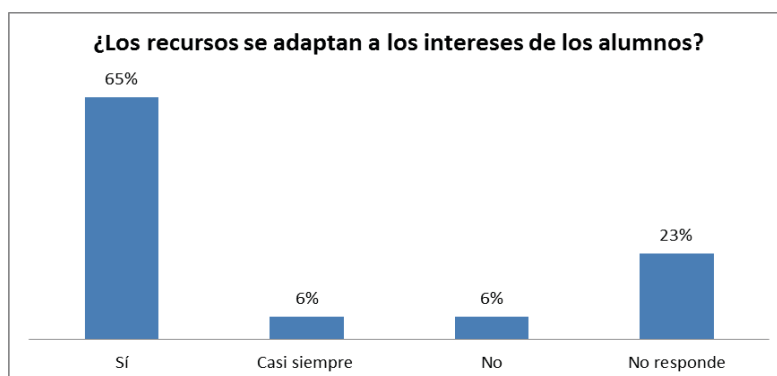


Gráfico 3. ¿Los recursos se adaptan a los intereses de los alumnos?

Esto se debe principalmente, según los profesores y directivos, a que las distintas acciones comprometidas en el plan de mejora, son producto de un diagnóstico de contenidos y necesidades de los alumnos.

Un 58% de los docentes afirma que la incorporación de recursos a través de la Ley SEP, ha producido algún cambio en el uso de las estrategias en las asignaturas de lenguaje y matemática.

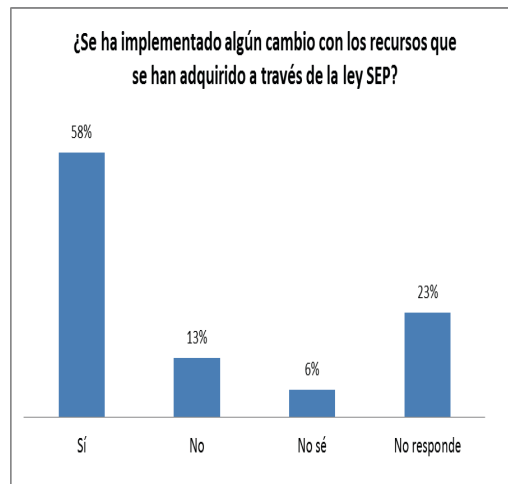


Gráfico 4. ¿Se ha implementado algún cambio con los recursos que se han adquirido de la ley SEP?

Un 55% de docentes opina que el recurso más solicitado por los alumnos es la pizarra interactiva, seguido del uso de la computadores (29%). Por otra parte, se evidencian tres recursos pedagógicos que comparten el mismo grado de preferencia, el uso del laboratorio, guías y materiales impresos y juegos didácticos (puzles). Asimismo, un 16% de los docentes no responde. Si se agrupan las respuestas independientes en dos categorías se puede agregar que los recursos tecnológicos son altamente valorados, a diferencia de los recursos convencionales que son menos valorados por los alumnos.



Gráfico 5. ¿Qué recursos didácticos solicitan los alumnos con más frecuencia?

Del mismo modo, la mitad de los docentes afirma que el recurso tecnológico más utilizado es la pizarra interactiva. Por otro lado, la pizarra blanca (recurso convencional) se valora en un bajo porcentaje. En tercera opción se observa el material del entorno también con una baja valoración (10%).

Además de la pizarra interactiva se valoran altamente otros recursos tecnológicos tales como videos y software de matemática. Por otra parte, entre los recursos convencionales, se consideran los textos escolares (los cuales se trabajan en forma digitalizada), las guías de trabajo y la pizarra blanca. El recurso pizarra interactiva es valorado por un 93% de los alumnos, lo cual representa un alto grado de utilización. No obstante, un 90% y 80% de los

alumnos, respectivamente, también declara utilizar textos y guías de trabajo en la sala de clases. Por último, entre los recursos menos utilizados se encuentran el software educativo de matemática (30%), el uso de gráficos (18%) y la utilización del proyector o data show (15%).



Gráfico 6. Recursos pedagógicos que utiliza tu profesor/a en la sala de clases

Los directivos y profesores opinan que gracias a la Ley SEP ha sido posible instaurar nuevas herramientas para facilitar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, es decir, nuevo material didáctico como por ejemplo las pizarras interactivas. Los docentes destacan que éstas son un plus, porque hoy en día los alumnos son más tecnológicos, entonces estas pizarras son más atractivas y cercanas para ellos.

En relación a la frecuencia con que se utilizan los recursos, se corrobora el uso del recurso Pizarra Interactiva (PI) diariamente. Por otro lado, un porcentaje menor comparten las opciones una vez por semana y cada dos días.

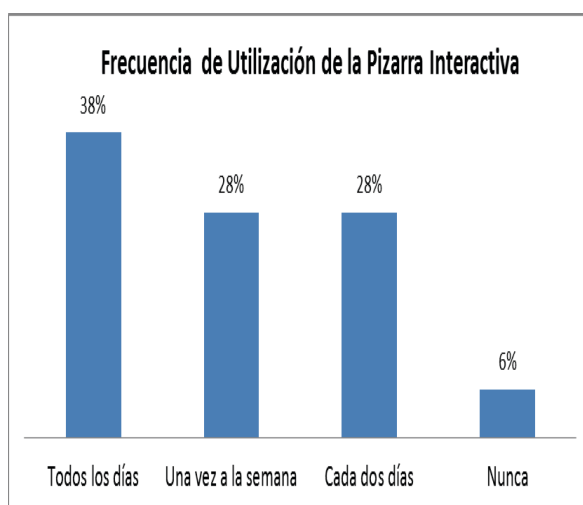


Gráfico 7. Frecuencia de utilización de la Pizarra Interactiva

La percepción de los apoderados en torno a la frecuencia de uso de los recursos entregó los siguientes resultados:



Gráfico 8. Recursos didácticos más frecuentes utilizados por alumnos/as en escuela

Un 93% de los apoderados identifica la pizarra interactiva como el recurso tecnológico más utilizado, seguido del recurso convencional texto escolar (80%). Asimismo, un 78% de los apoderados destaca las impresiones y fotocopias como los recursos convencionales más utilizados. Sin embargo, la baja valoración de la opción "otros recursos" se asocia al hecho que son recursos específicos de una asignatura en particular.

Las estrategias que los docentes utilizan con mayor frecuencia en el desarrollo de los aprendizajes de los alumnos son la opción "Otras" considerada por más de la mitad de los docentes (55%). Esta opción incluye el monitoreo, la retroalimentación y lluvia de ideas en su mayoría. Le sigue el uso de la pizarra interactiva y uso de juegos. Por otra parte, las estrategias menos valoradas en el desarrollo de los aprendizajes la conforman los trabajos en grupo y las lecturas en general.

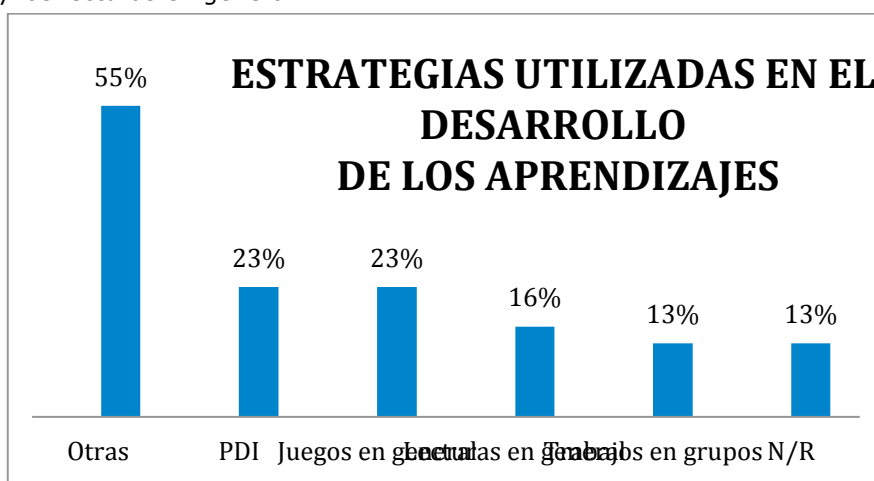


Gráfico 9. Estrategias utilizadas en el desarrollo de los aprendizajes

En las entrevistas los docentes mencionan la importancia de equilibrar los recursos tecnológicos con las actividades lúdicas de los alumnos, con el objetivo de mejorar las interacción y colaboración entre los alumnos.

Los alumnos señalan estar de acuerdo con la existencia de recursos didácticos, tanto tecnológicos como convencionales, que favorecen el proceso educativo en cada asignatura y a los cuales tienen fácil acceso. Se destaca la alta valoración asignada al buen manejo de los contenidos de las materias que enseñan sus profesores. La utilización de una variedad de recursos audiovisuales y didácticos como también el programa de mantención de los recursos didácticos es igualmente altamente valorada. Por otro lado, los alumnos tienen la percepción de que los materiales utilizados en la clase son entretenidos y las actividades propuestas por los docentes son motivadoras. Los alumnos destacan el acompañamiento del profesor en el desarrollo de su aprendizaje. Solamente un pequeño porcentaje de la muestra no expresa su opinión.

De acuerdo a los resultados obtenidos, se destaca el alto nivel de satisfacción de los apoderados (76%) con la forma en que los docentes enseñan a sus pupilos. Asimismo, los apoderados señalan que los profesores aplican adecuadamente los recursos audiovisuales y didácticos que se encuentran disponibles en el establecimiento. Igualmente, la percepción de los apoderados indica que los materiales utilizados por los docentes en la clase contribuyen al proceso de formación de sus pupilos.

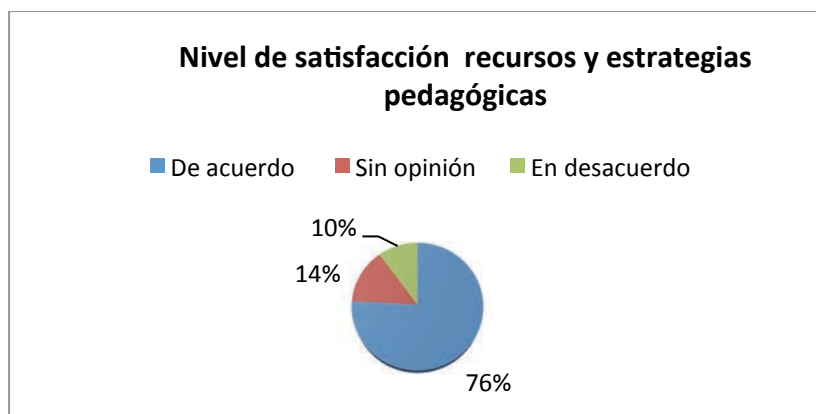


Gráfico 10. Nivel de satisfacción, recursos y estrategias pedagógicas

Lo cual concuerda con la percepción del equipo directivo respecto al nivel de satisfacción entre los recursos didácticos y las estrategias metodológicas, que también es altamente favorable y valorada.

VI. Conclusión

La Ley SEP logró movilizar e ingresar en la "vida" del establecimiento educacional, puesto que es parte de su cultura organizacional.

Se observa un catastro ordenado de los recursos incluyendo procedimientos y criterios para la adquisición de los mismos y están acorde a las necesidades e intereses de los alumnos.

La pizarra interactiva es altamente valorada por los profesores y alumnos y se demuestra la apropiación de competencias para su utilización en los procesos formativos, en especial en las asignaturas de lenguaje y matemática.

Las estrategias utilizadas en lenguaje y matemática son variadas y según la apreciación de los docentes, éstas son también innovadoras.

Entre las acciones que apoyan la capacitación de los docentes, se observa que el colegio se preocupa permanentemente de la formación del personal administrativo y profesional del establecimiento centrándose en estrategias didácticas innovadoras y la utilización de los recursos adquiridos a través de la Ley SEP.

En el Plan de Mejora SEP se intenta perfeccionar las competencias pedagógicas de los profesores. En este contexto, el establecimiento educacional evidencia una política de mejoramiento a través de las distintas instancias de capacitación con las que se cuenta.

La incorporación de recursos tecnológicos en el aula representa una forma de acercar a los alumnos más vulnerables de la comuna a una tecnología de primer nivel. Asimismo, estos recursos tecnológicos han sido integrados por el cuerpo de profesores, lo que indica la adquisición de experiencia ante las problemáticas educativas que involucra el uso de recursos informáticos en las prácticas pedagógicas.

La posibilidad de realizar un proyecto utilizando recursos tecnológicos, en particular una pizarra interactiva, permitirá alcanzar diferentes conocimientos con respecto a su implementación en el establecimiento educacional, con la finalidad de desarrollar una estrategia en relación a la medición del impacto y resultado de esta innovación.

La comunidad educativa valora fuertemente la llegada de nuevos recursos especialmente destinados a financiar iniciativas de mejoramiento.

Los resultados de la encuesta permitieron obtener datos en relación a la implementación de recursos y estrategias metodológicas para la mejora continua en el contexto del Plan SEP. Esta investigación, exploratoria, amerita futuras investigaciones con otro tipo de instrumentos y desde otras perspectivas metodológicas, que nos puedan brindar datos más significativos y profundos de las implicaciones pedagógicas, cognitivas, instruccionales como también insumos para la creación de materiales educativos.

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Multimedia games for fun and learning English in preschool

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Abstract

Based on the assumption that educational software addressing Primary school learners must comprise a set of features to encourage children's creativity and development, the appropriate design of second language hypermedia adaptive games for Primary School children can pose a wide range of challenges both for the language teacher and computer specialist alike. Factors such as the educational context, cognitive abilities, linguistic constraints, conceptual and psychomotor restrictions, and so on, contribute to challenging professionals. This means they must deal with linguistic, content and technology adaptation queries.

Based on the results from multi-factorial analysis, this paper aims firstly to demonstrate that the design of hypermedia tasks can be optimally implemented by following previous phases of data collection on preferred items. In this sense, the questioning approach for the creation of a hypermedia system has led us to analyze learning factors in order to deal with the possible linguistic, conceptual and technological demands in the children's learning environment. General results in the preliminary phases of the study show the need to steer the learning path towards an effective adaptation to children's cognitive abilities. These are the findings from which we have devised a set of hypermedia tasks which provide the adaptation of the information presented to the student according to individual objectives, interests and/or knowledge.

Keywords

adaptive hypermedia systems, CALL, web-based systems, preschool and ICT

I. Introduction

Computer technology is being widely used for teaching a foreign language at all types of levels and settings (Stockwell, 2012). The key factor sought in the classroom is effectiveness in the use of resources, a search which can be especially intricate and yet rewarding in the case of young learners (Edwards, Pemberton, Knight, & Monaghan, 2002; Plowman, Stevenson, Stephen, & McPake, 2012). We believe that for very young learners, a possible solution should be input management by means of adaptive hypermedia systems (AHS), conceived and designed according to specific early age language learning needs, demands, and abilities (Prentzas, 2012).

This paper aims to present some significant data in the light of the claims above, in particular, the development of a tutoring system and games focused on teaching and researching foreign language learning at an early age. Designed under the auspices of a regional research project, our work (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2006) is applied to 3-6 year-old children whose foreign language learning development includes IT as a prime teaching tool.

To reach the objectives, the paper is divided into four general sections and starts out with a brief introduction to the combination of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and foreign language learning in childhood settings. This section is followed by data collection through an analysis of the factors involved. Then, the design of hypermedia tasks appropriate for primary school children are dealt with, describing the architecture of the system, and the platform which contains and personalizes both the content and the interface, adapting them to each student's needs. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the information interaction found and the lines opened for further research are presented.

II. Multifactorial analysis

There is a growing agreement about the many different ways that ICT can contribute to changing—the types of the activities, roles and relationships experienced by children. In this sense, the appropriate uses of ICT in early childhood education settings could be based on the minor pressure to meet educational targets and the suitability to experiment and apply children-centred practices (Liang, Yuan, & He, 2009).

Many are the possibilities by which ICT can be part of early childhood education, either by the integration of technology into children's learning process and fun -using ICT in their play or learning - or by using ICT to monitor, plan and manage children's learning -building portfolios of children's work for evaluating progress, for exchanging information with other teachers or, parents- (Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012; Turgut & İrgin, 2009).

All planning for the introduction and use of ICT in early childhood education should be grounded in a clear understanding of the purposes, practices and social environments. In this sense, children's needs should be found and the uses of everyday technology identified, so that young learners can have fruitful chances to use ICT as a support of their learning and entertainment (Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007).

There are studies which support the need for educators to have well-developed understandings of the potential of ICT (e.g. O'Hara, 2004; O'Rourke & Harrison, 2004; Patterson, 2004), while there are other authors who claim that children's experience (or lack

of experience) with ICT at home and with their parents involvement is an important factor in planning for the use of ICT at early ages (Brooker & Siraj-Blatchford, 2002; Downes, 2002; Lee, Hatherly, & Ramsey, 2012).

On the other hand, other contextual factors to explain the lack of ICT use in early childhood education could include: teachers' limited training, insufficient equipment, absence of technical support or a lack of time to develop ICT-integrated teaching or learning activities (O'Hara, 2004).

Under any of these circumstances, an approach which could describe how children's interactions with computers and other forms of ICT takes place lies in the concept of guided interaction, a guidance supported by teachers and parents by face-to-face interactions and/or by the visual and verbal instructions provided by the computer itself (Durham, Farkas, Hammer, Bruce Tomblin, & Catts, 2007; Garrett & Young, 2009; Gjems, 2013).

Likewise, the concept of task and game performance in pre-school settings should be focused more on the process of learning than on the successful achievement of content. Most of preschool programs are characterized by raising awareness and are designed as a foundation on which more complex skills depend- e.g. recognizing symbols which will help them read, physical development allowing children to perform more complicated movements, adaptive computer interactions which will let them develop more complex functions, developments which will prepare children to deal successfully with the challenges of further school and everyday tasks (Aghlara & Tamjid, 2011; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012).

If one of the most critical steps of language learning at early ages is the process of picking out and recognizing words, sounds and basic structures of a language (Burchinal, Field, López, Howes, & Pianta, 2012; Ekizoglu & Ekizoglu, 2011; Sun & Dong, 2004), our adaptive set of games could make children part of an enriched multimedia environment in which the acquisition of these language components are encouraged by:

- Engaging children in vocabulary, key sentences and short conversation repetitions, which will help young learners to read, to recount a story and interact with others, important aspect of oral language development (Korat, 2010).
- Playing in a hypermedia context for children's language development. The adaptive games which will help children try out new ways of combining thought and language (Cumbreño, Rico, Curado, & Domínguez, 2006).
- Scaffolding. Children's language is enhanced when adults, older children or in our case computer games scaffold their play, making them bear in mind their roles. (Linklater, O'Connor, & Palardy, 2009).
- Interactions with multimedia environments -symbols, shapes, sounds, colors and even letters- are powerful in forming understandings about their daily life and world around them (Griva, Semoglou, & Geladari, 2010).
- Creating phonological awareness through hearing and thinking about the language itself can help children learn to read. When children are able to map the sounds of speech onto the letters they become aware that continuous speech is broken down into discrete sounds (Seker, Girgin, & Akamca, 2012).

- Development of language fluency can be based on the game instructions, the continuous interactions and the opportunities to engage children in spelling activities (Kleemans, Segers, & Verhoeven, 2011).
- Listening to short stories (and reading when older than 6) depends on vocabulary and general knowledge, skills which can be developed through the completion of the computer games. While oral comprehension may develop “naturally,” reading requires instruction. It is a process in which multimedia can play a leading factor (Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007).

a. Computer within the preschool classroom

According to research experts (S. W. Haugland, 2000; Stephen & Plowman, 2008; Plowman, Stevenson, Mcpake, Stephen, & Adey, 2011), claims are made to the effect that computers should be physically introduced in kindergarten and primary level classrooms in a coherently integrated fashion with the rest of the learning resources. Opposed to the creation of separate computer rooms removed from the habitual learning area of the children, the recommendable student /computer ratio, (S. W. Haugland, 2000), maintains the suitability of students’ corners, having one computer for every seven pupils, at most.

Thus, classrooms for early ages must be organized in such a way as to globally enhance knowledge-building, and specific methodological proposals of classroom organization can include activity corners that promote cooperation by means of tools like digital boards and computer stations. Furthermore, in this kind of atmosphere it seems that children activate their cognitive strategies, observe each other, play an active role in the learning process, explore and experiment with everything around them, exercise memory, develop motor skills, and so on. An added bonus is that collaborative work could also encourage the most advanced learners to behave as helpful peer-tutors of those who are not quite as adept.

b. Software at early ages

According to Haugland (2000), the appropriate use of computers, as well as the educational software implemented, may increase creativity and even self esteem in children. He also claims that children, exposed to software that tends to boost their development, may successfully increase their intelligence, verbal and non verbal skills, visual and movement-related abilities, structural knowledge, long-term memory, problem-solving and decision-making abilities, as well as abstraction and conceptual formation skills. On the contrary, the uncontrolled use of ICTs in the classroom could have a negative impact on children, causing possible rejection or frustration.

Haugland (1997:134) devises a ten criteria scale to determine whether young learner software could foster effective learning and claims if obtaining a score of 7 or higher such software may be considered suitable for the child’s educational integration. Criteria could be summarized as follow: (1) adaptation to learner’s age, (2) ability of child to pay attention and be able to control the process, (3) clear instructions, (4) progress of difficulty levels, (5) self-access and work possibilities for child, (6) non-violent content, (7) orientation on learning process, (8) capability in program for real world modeling, (9) technical features in the program, and (10) capability of program to undergone adaptation and further developments.

However we think that using educational software based on high quality rates does not necessarily guarantee success in the classroom. Our claim is that the optimal assessment of a learning application is actually made by the teacher within the classroom.

As for the content presented, educational software must be open and invite exploration in order to increase the child's creativity as well as enhance motivation, commitment and curiosity. At this level, in which children do not yet have sophisticated reading and/or writing skills, the auditory presentation of instructions plays a leading role. For these reasons, all activities, the interface, software structure, vocabulary, and all the other ingredients must be tailored to the age of the potential users of the product. Scaffolding, the hierarchical building of sequential activities, is another key element for calibrated involvement through computer support. Scaffolding could enable young students to reach objectives and educational goals, and make children progressively integrate into the social environment, promote their autonomy, and build new competencies in an expedient fashion.

c. Children and computer interaction

Of special interest in our analysis is the question of dexterity with the computer mouse and interaction with the computer itself. Children's motor abilities, as we know, develop over time. For this reason they may encounter difficulties in controlling the input device chosen, have trouble selecting specific areas on the computer screen within the application, find holding down buttons on the mouse too hard at first, need development in skills like pressing keys on the keyboard, and so on.

Input options must be efficient and easy to operate in order to create a user-friendly environment. The device selected for interaction with the system is the mouse since it seems to be the most efficient device for this age (Wood et al., 2004). As children are learning to use the mouse and considering that one click, for example, is easier than dragging, drag and drop or double-click, operations like double click or drag and drop require repetition and extended practice. In other words, we need to adapt the use of the mouse in the activities and games to the dexterity children possess.

Thus, according to our in-class research, we can state that.

1. Children should be able to interact with the mouse as easily as possible, as a simple interface usually becomes more accessible. They can manage one-click actions better than dragging, drag-and-drop, and double-click actions. Consequently, the lowest stages should have more operations such as click, and point and click. Nonetheless, at this lower level, more difficult interaction types such as dragging and double click (albeit being deferred to higher levels) can be conveniently adapted, e.g., by clicking on the object to attach it to the pointer (click-move), and clicking again to drop it at the desired location (click-move-click).
2. Considering young learners have problems selecting small areas on the screen, objects should be large enough and clearly distinguished. The same criteria should be applied to navigation buttons which, in addition, should have the same or very similar functionality for younger users.

d. Cognition, mental development and L2 acquisition at early ages

Although a number of child developmental theories have been used in the literature to speculate whether (or how) the computer would affect very young learners, either positively or negatively, (Brady & Hill, 1984; Elkind, 1987; Clements, Nastasi, & Swaminathan, 1993; Schetz & Stremmel, 1994), most of recent studies conclude that the adequate use of ICTs at these ages can improve children development (Plowman & Stephen, 2005; Clarke, 2006; Stephen & Plowman, 2008; Mangen, 2010; Anders et al., 2012; O'Hara, 2011; Peng, 2012; Plowman et al., 2012).

As stated, young learners have difficulties in understanding abstract concepts since they have not yet acquired most of the basic knowledge required for complex conceptualization and intricate information. They in turn, understand visual icons and relate to recognizable items which help them to extend knowledge and meaning. Within cognitive abilities at this age, imagination is instrumental and plays a leading role. Children are clever at associating learning situations with situations in real life, a quality which can be exploited for learning purposes. In this sense, most metaphoric proposals should be reserved for higher levels, since at lower stages children tend to expect all the objects to present the same proprieties as their real-life counterparts which does not mean that abstract content must be altogether omitted. In essence, the principle rule of design for content and levels of difficulty is that the software be fully adapted to children's features and cognitive abilities.

III. Data collection for user modelling and content

a. Contextual research

It is necessary to examine some of the learning variables involved in the creation of digital tasks, a questioning process which recommends quantitative analysis in order to study the influential factors at this level. For that purpose, initial research thorough questionnaires has been conducted in all the Primary centres in Extremadura (south-western Spain). This exploratory approach includes a set of questions regarding the number of students and teachers per class, hours per week dedicated to the teaching of English, the material and skills being practised in class and the like.

The first questionnaire was answered on-line by most teachers though it was also handed out in schools in paper form. The main information relevant to our study from this questionnaire is summarized as follows:

1. There is an average of 71 primary students per school and 17 students in the English classes.
2. 38 percent of the teachers using English in class do not have a specific degree in English.
3. The average time dedicated to English per week is one hour and 15 minutes.
4. More than 50 percent of the schools offer English as an extra-curricular activity in afternoon / evening classes.

5. As a result of regional governmental policies and funding encouraging computer literacy, starting in Pre-School on up, our community, Extremadura, has become a leader in Europe with regard to implanting ICTs at this early level.
6. Likewise, one of the main purposes was to find out exactly what kinds of resources were being used in the early language learning classrooms in Extremadura. In addition to the traditional resources used and measured by percentage from left to right in Figure 1 books, audio material, and flashcards, the use of computers reaches a 42% in the foreign language classroom of primary schools.
- 7.

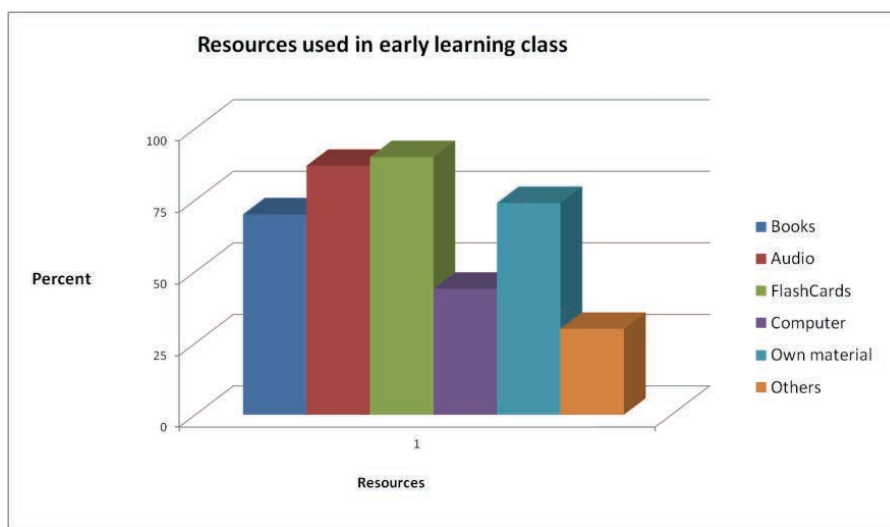


Figure 1. ICTs in Early Learning classes

In this sense and though almost 50 percent of the English teachers use computers in class as either a supporting tool or for games, more than 60 percent of the teachers recognise a demand for software that adapts to the students' levels and age.

b. Pedagogic domain

For the development of the pedagogic domain (nodes of information, content and links), the design of the hypermedia proposal is based on four main sources: (1) the European Portfolio for pre-school education (<http://www.edupa.uva.es/portfolio/>); (2) regional and national legislation regulating the implementation of English teaching in pre-school; (3) questionnaires and surveys on the teachers' observations of classroom preferences and curricular interests in the preschool classroom and (4) corpus-based linguistic information.

The European Portfolio of Languages (ELP) is a customized document designed to foster the recording of foreign language learners' individualized experiences with the learning process. The ELP proposes activities and tasks to be developed both in the classroom and at home so that children may become familiarized with the languages that surround them and begin to acquire specific content and skills. The ELP establishes learning marks by means of positioning specific skills that the child should have according to the levels.

As we said, the development of the hypermedia-tasks is also based on regional and national contexts. On 21 August 2001, the Council of Education, Science and Technology of the regional government (Junta de Extremadura), published an order regulating the

implementation of English teaching in pre-school, becoming a part of the 2003/2004 curriculum for children aged 3 to 6 years old. Moreover, Royal Decree 829/2003 (LOCE, 2003) established as its second core objective (article 3) the need to foster foreign language learning in combination with educational technologies during children’s early school years for the same age group:

Educational institutions shall foster the integration of a foreign language during Elementary and Pre-elementary stages of schooling, especially during the last year, and shall enhance the early use and application of Information and Communication. (personal translation)

In addition to the theoretical foundations derived from the educative legislation, questionnaires and surveys conducted at the schools informed us about preferences and interests regarding skills and micro-skills to be exploited with the learners (the main finding are shown in Figure 2).

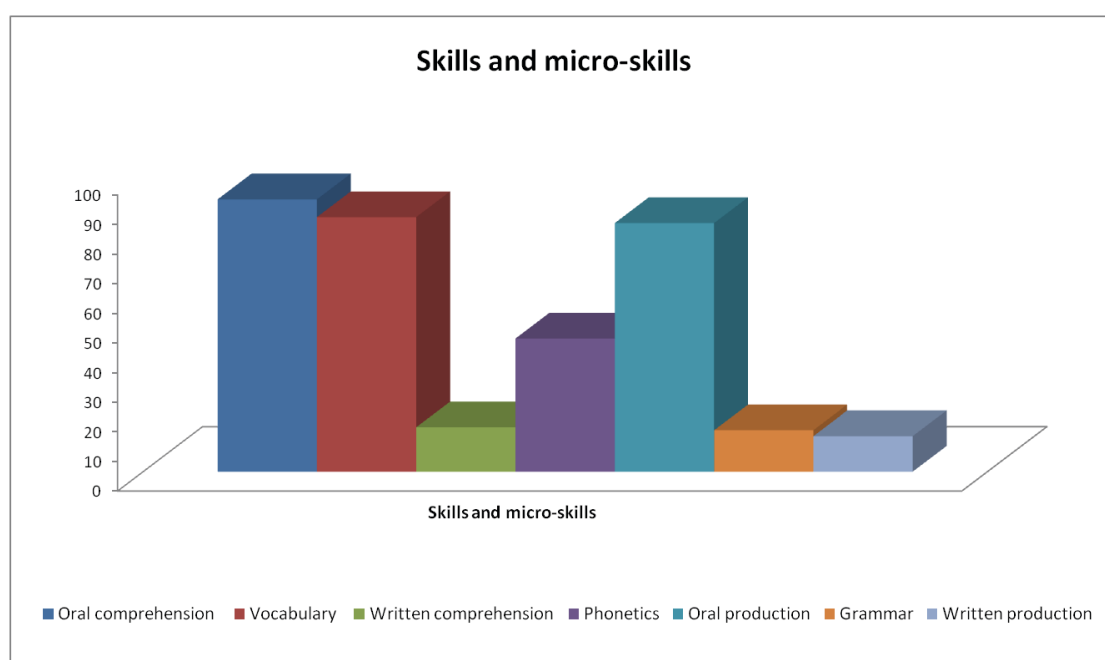


Figure 2. Skills and micro-skills for Preschool Children

As observed in Figure 2, oral comprehension and oral production are regarded as especially significant and thus emphasized in class. Vocabulary is also practised quite often by means of songs and inductive games. However, written production and comprehension are not valued as important at these early stages.

Finally, with the aim of establishing clear criteria and objectives for the empirical observation of real child communication, we integrated linguistic-communicative information based on selected transcripts from the CHILDES corpus (Child Language Data Exchange System), freely available on the web (<http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/>). As an illustration of our research, the use of singular first and second person pronouns by three and four year olds is noteworthy according to the statistical analysis of the corpus. In addition, there are a large number of nouns (nominalizations) in five year olds by comparison with other age categories. In contrast, in the case of English speaking children in USA, the first person pronoun is used more at three and four years of age, whereas at later stages, this use decreases substantially.

In the analysis of the Table 1 we show how the contrastive view and itemization of such linguistic-communicative data between the terms and concepts introduced in our tasks and the frequency that appears in CHILDES, helped us in the design of the lessons.

Word	yes/no	Frequency
Head	Yes	179
Shoulder	Yes	695
Leg	Yes	552
Foot	Yes	506
Body	Yes	663
Hand	Yes	132
Look	Yes	134
Face	Yes	651
Mouth	Yes	307
One	Yes	865
Two	Yes	84
Three	Yes	146
Four	Yes	178
Five	Yes	110
Six	Yes	172
Seven	Yes	185
Eight	Yes	285
Nine	Yes	169
Long	Yes	223
Big	Yes	109
Blue	Yes	535
Red	Yes	397

Table 1. CHILDES: contrastive study

An interesting conclusion, after the quantitative analyses of legislation, questionnaires and oral transcripts, is the sequencing of topics tends to be fixed across the curricula from ages three to six. From all this information, seven didactic units are established, shaping the pedagogic domain in our hypermedia system: unit 1 Hello, unit 2 The body, unit 3 The family, unit 4 Toys, unit 5 Food, unit 6 The house, unit 7 The school.

Thus, with the information requested, we aim to elaborate charts of specific content and lessons to be programmed interactively depending on the type of learner to whom the unit is addressed (three, four, or five years old). Table 2 shows the content information that teachers answered regarding each unit that they deal with according to the different age levels.

Concepts	3	4	5
Colours			
Greetings and introductions			
Numbers			
Sizes and shapes			
The weather			
Feelings (love, hate ...) and likes - (I like/ I don't like)			
Specific Vocabulary of unit			

Simple descriptions of objects, people ...			
Space /time orientation (up, down, near ...)			
Actions (read, jump, run)			
Relatives (family, friends)			
Sensations, states of mind (happy, bored, I am cold...)			
Daily routines (wash one's hands, have breakfast...) and parts of the day			
Linguistic content			
Like/ Dislike			
Prepositions			
Commands (Imperative) - Let's			
To be			
It is ...			
Are you?			
To have			
Personal and possessive pronouns			
Can/Could - Would you like ...			
Adjectives - Comparative and superlative			
These is/are			
Do/does - Yes/no questions			
Wh/ open questions - Interrogative pronouns			
Vowels			

Table 2: Content exploited according to age levels

IV. Adaptive games for primary school children

a. Architecture

The architecture (Agudo, Sánchez, Rico & Domínguez, 2007:3850; Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2010) is divided into three different levels:

- The user interface executed by the user in the navigator.
- The Intelligent Server for the Adaptive Selection of Educational Tasks (SISATE – Servidor Inteligente para la Selección Adaptiva de Tareas Educativas) which are executed in the Server.
- The resource stockroom which holds the user data, the contents of the tasks, and the tasks themselves with their corresponding rules.

The user interface shows the learner the adaptive activities and scenes, as well as supplying the means of navigation through the contents. The intelligent Server makes the decisions on which particular tasks are those which are adequate for the individual user by calculating his/her characteristics. Furthermore, it completes the job of storing the learner's progress.

Last but not least, the resource stockroom is a database, which as its name suggests, stores all the data necessary for the correct functioning of the system, which includes user reference data, the content of the teaching units of the pedagogical domain, and the tasks and rules which will ultimately determine the content that will be visualized by each learner. Communication on the part of the client and on the part of the Server (Figure 3) is reached via XML documents generated on the Server side in order to indicate on the client side the task which should be shown and which contents should be selected in order to build them, while the user interface takes charge of the actual construction. Once the client has finished the task, he/she will return it to the Server in another XML file, however, it should be noted that in this case, it will contain the results obtained by the learner regarding the task realization. Meanwhile the intelligent Server will fulfill the job of storing it in the user model.

This kind of architecture allows for the reuse of the intelligent Server for any type of adaptive application, since it only requires implementation of the XML communication protocol between the client and the Server in order to avail itself of the SISATE features which supply the adaptation, once again, based on the system's tasks and rules.

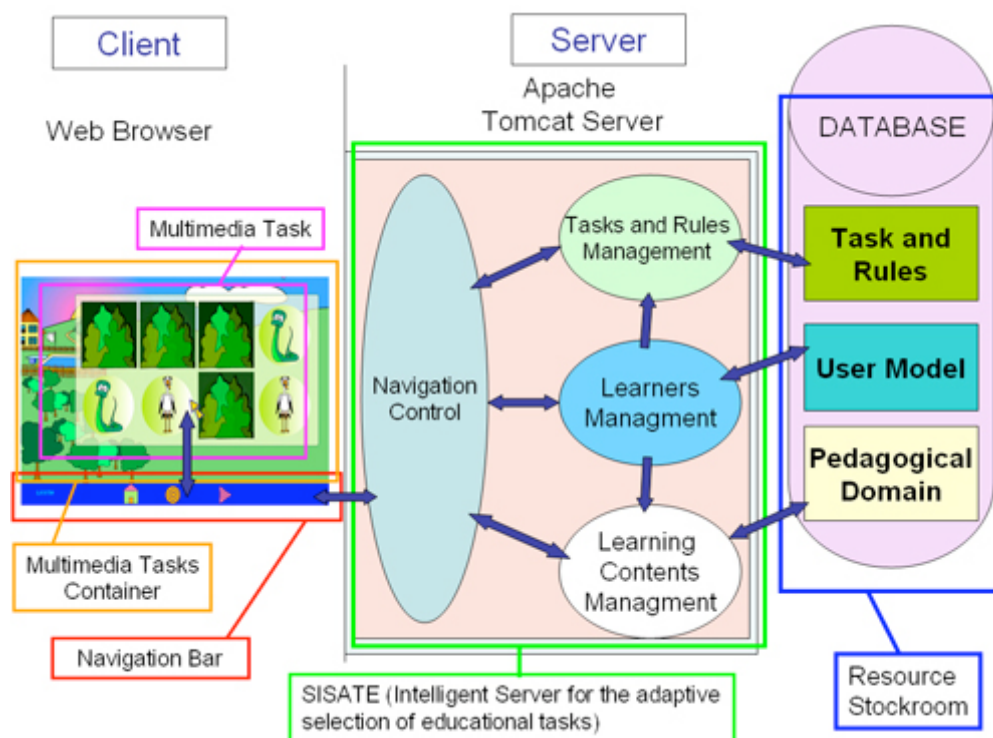


Figure 3. The architecture of SHAIEx (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2010)

i. User interface

The user interface is implemented in Macromedia Flash and is executed in the navigator belonging to the last user. It is divided into two main parts referred to as the navigation bar and, the container of the multimedia tasks.

The navigation bar consists of three buttons which permit user navigation through the contents offered. Its design has been carefully analyzed in order to adjust to the needs of very young learners. It searches for an interface which facilitates an intuitive as well as a simple navigation through the contents in order to avoid problems arising from the limited

physical development in this age group. The image of the tiny house (the button on the extreme left) allows the child to go back home, that is, to the main menu of the application. This option is always available to facilitate a return to the beginning should the child feel the desire to do so. The full spiral circle (the button in the centre) goes around and around allowing for the repetition of the current tasks simply because the child has found it to be attractive, or just because he/she needs to do it again. Lastly, the directional triangle (the button on the far right) pointing towards the right is used to move onwards and advance in that particular activity.

We can visualize an identification type $LxUyTz$ on the screen to the extreme left of the buttons themselves. Here, Lx indicates the level of the current user, wherein Uy stands for the learning unit in which the student is currently working, while Tz represents the activity which is on display at the current moment. At this age level this information is of little or no interest to the child, but rather it serves as ID which facilitates an easy reference for the teacher to improve on errors and locate where exactly the learner is stuck if help is solicited. On the other hand, the buttons displayed on the right identify the user of the application by means of a photo or drawing.

The container of the multimedia tasks completes the mission of showing the educational tasks, be it in scenes or be it in activities according to the information received in the intelligent Server by means of the navigation bar. The container dynamically builds the tasks with the content adapted to the user and thus, makes it visible to him or her.

The navigation bar is in charge of communicating with the intelligent Server, which in turn sends back the task to be visualized. When dealing specifically with a task, the navigation bar informs the multimedia task container which task it should show as well as its contents. When several tasks should be returned, the navigation bar dynamically builds a menu with the possible tasks to be done, and, informs the container of those multimedia tasks to be shown.

Intelligent Server for the adaptive selection of educational tasks.

SISATE is the true core of the SHAIEx platform as it is responsible for deciding the most adequate task for each individual user at any given moment of the learning process. For the purposes of implementation the Apache Tomcat Server has been utilized for the development of a series of Servlets which apply the required functions. SISATE consists of four main components, namely, navigation control, tasks and rules management, user management system, and learning contents management.

Firstly, the role played by navigation control is that of communication between the intelligent Server and the user interface. Fundamentally, it transfers the interface calls to various administrators, and it formats the information received so as to return it to the client side.

Secondly, the tasks and rules management system is in charge of running through the dynamic structure of the corresponding tasks to each user by means of teaching learning rules which determine the most appropriate path for the student to follow.

Thirdly, the user management system handles the data corresponding to the user model of each student and keeps the aforementioned data up to date regarding student progress.

Fourthly, the content management is fed by what is contained in the pedagogical domain in order to determine what contents are the most appropriate ones within the tasks or scenes in adapting to the user's features.

Based on the previously outlined premises, the work process of SHAIEx can be expressed in the following terms: Once the user has been recognized by the system, the navigation bar solicits the next task from SISATE through navigation control, which communicates with the tasks and rules management, which in turn indicates the task which corresponds to each learner. At this point the system determines the corresponding tasks and rules by consulting the teaching database of the same name, and through the user management system, the student user model. Having established the corresponding tasks, all this information is returned to navigation control, although we reiterate that under those circumstances when several tasks are being dealt with, the information is returned to the navigation bar.

The information itself is returned by means of an XML file which stores the task list along with a reduced amount of information on each task so that a menu can be built in the user interface which allows for selection of the desired activity. The menu can be visualized in the multimedia container and the user can choose one of the many possible tasks offered there. Choosing a task makes the navigation bar resume communication with the navigation control system to request full information regarding that particular activity. Given this situation, as we are already aware of the activity we are to show, the learning contents management is directly consulted on what is contained in the task in question. The contents of the task are determined by the learning contents management, by the task itself and by the user model obtained from the learner's management system. Thus, the information on these task contents are returned to navigation control which returns an XML file with all of the information surrounding that particular activity as follows: configuration, content, and blocks of content in the case of adaptive activities. The navigation bar receives the information and dynamically builds the adaptive activity with the elements indicated, and finally, provides for its visualization in the multimedia task container.

When the tasks and rules management is consulted, one sole task is returned. Instead of only returning the information relative to that task, the navigation control system consults the contents management system of all the task associate content (animations, graphs and sounds). Afterwards, this contents management consults the pedagogical domain for all the necessary information to directly build the task. Furthermore, the information in the XML file is sent to the navigation bar, which in turn, dynamically builds the adaptive scene or activity in order to show it by means of the multimedia task container.

Resource stockroom

The intelligent Server needs to store user information, the contents and the structuring through the use of tasks and rules. This information is stored in a database that is divided into what are referred to as the pedagogical domain, tasks and rules, and, the user model.

Within the pedagogical domain the contents of every task and scene are stored in the form of animations, graphs and sounds. The aforementioned contents are grouped in blocks that associate the content which refers to each concept relative to the various activities and levels.

The structure of the adaptive course is stored in the section on tasks and rules by means of a description of the activities which make it up, and those rules that determine which tasks will be shown to each user type. The intelligent Server is based on a user model in order to determine what teaching rules are to be applied, and therefore, what tasks will be chosen.

Finally, the user model stores all the necessary user information required for realization of the adaptation and follow up of student activity in the platform. As a result of this follow up, the tutor establishes when to update the user model with the express purpose of moving the learner up to the next educational level.

The database additionally sees to it that all the necessary information is stored for the system administration. Therefore the information as regards teachers, educational centers and classrooms is stored, assuring the correct functioning of the platform.

b. Adaptation

Our system (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2006) provides adaptation of the information presented to the student according to the following specific user features:

- Educational level: Based on the curriculum for pre-school education.
- Knowledge: Contents adapted as the child progresses.
- Dexterity with the mouse: Adaptation of the mouse interaction style in those activities and games relevant to the actual dexterity preschoolers possess in order for them to be able to handle it (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2010). This feature can be assessed by examining the speed at which children execute the operation, the number of mistakes they make and how comfortable children feel while using the mouse (Donker & Reitsma, 2007).
- Language: We will allow the inclusion of other languages (French, Spanish, etc.) that the children may be learning at school.
- Difficulty of the activities: The complexity of the activities and games will be adapted to the age level.
- Textual information: We may, or may not, include a textual label according to the age level of the target learners.

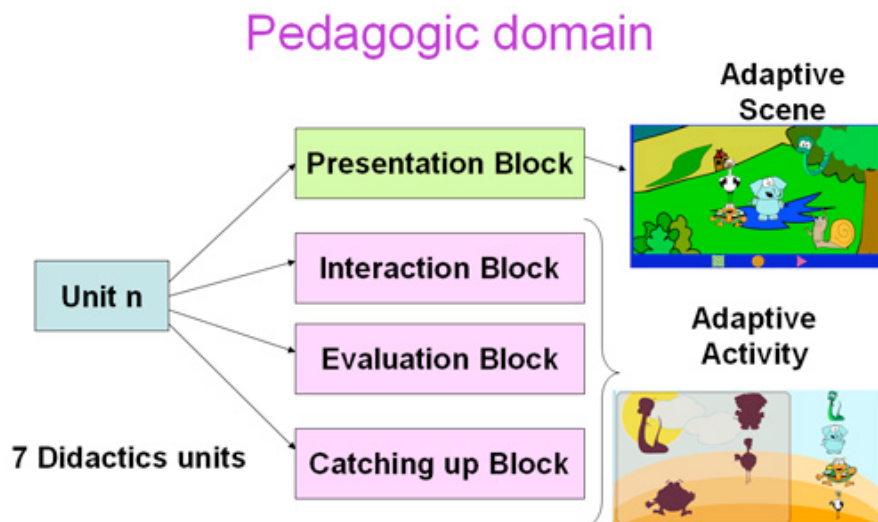


Figure 4. Pedagogic domain structure

These features comprise the set up of the user model which allows for adaptive navigation support, adaptive presentation and adaptive interaction according to the user's features (Brusilovsky, 2001; Durlach & Lesgold, 2012). The children's educational level and their knowledge are both used to provide adaptive navigation support and determine the adequate learning path for the children. For adaptive presentation we use the language, the difficulty of the task, the textual information and also the educational level to be kept in mind when presenting the contents. Lastly, we use dexterity with the mouse to provide adaptive interaction, the activities children will be able to do with click, double click, drag & drop, etc. depending on their motor abilities.

We implement the adaptation through the adaptive scenes, adaptive activities and structural rules (Carro, Pulido, & Rodríguez, 1999). By means of the structural rules we divide the pedagogic domain in didactic units, each of which includes four blocks of activities, namely: presentation, interaction, evaluation and review (Figure 4).

- The first block is aimed at familiarizing learners with word association and vocabulary acquisition by interactive means.
- The second block is designed to consolidate concepts and linguistic content by means of interactive games.
- The third part evaluates acquired knowledge. The teaching blocks are presented to the user in an orderly fashion according to specific teaching rules. So, before accessing the evaluation block, input and interaction blocks should have been previously successfully achieved.
- The fourth block will be presented to the student only when the evaluation block has not been achieved, or alternatively, for revision purposes.

Each block consists of one or more activity scenes (i.e. tasks), which are essentially educational games or animated scenes that the young learner is either to complete or simply observe. These tasks are implemented with adaptive scenes and activities. The adaptive scenes present content according to the educational level of each student and the target

language to be learned. As illustrated in figure 2, the sample presentation of unit 2 “The Body” for learning levels 2 and 3, the number of characters differs with respect to the learning level we encounter. Whereas level 2 introduces the stork, turtle, snake and elephant as starting input, level 3 adds the snail and the frog to the cast of actors. As the level increases, so does the complexity of the dialogues with the aim of introducing additional expressions and vocabulary. Continuing with the example shown in Figure 5, the vocabulary of level 2 includes “Head, Body, Leg, Foot, Hand and Shoulder”, to consecutively expand to “Face, Mouth, Eyes, Nose and Ears” in level 3.

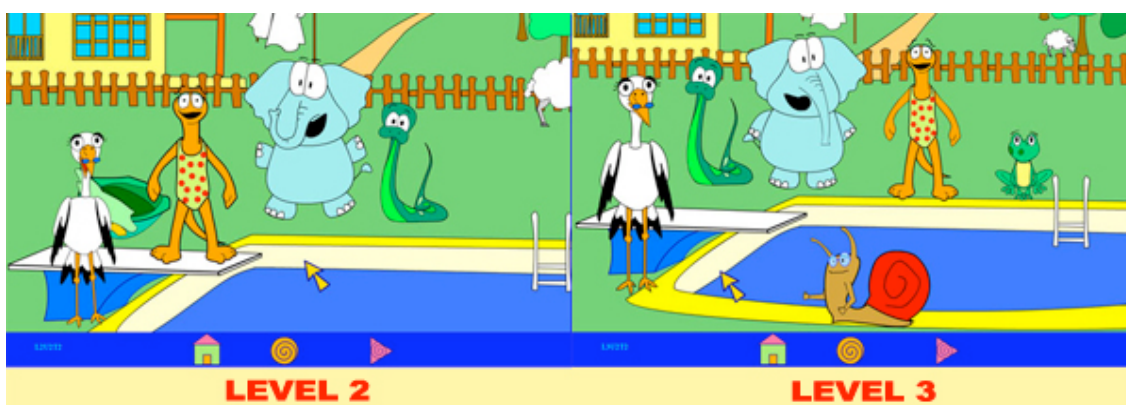


Figure 5. Adaptive scene from SHAIEx.

Immediately following the presentation of the contents, children are allowed to interact with the elements in the scene by clicking on each of them to reinforce vocabulary as well as to encourage their active participation. Finally, to conclude the presentation block, each one of the elements is individually shown as a separate item for a few seconds in order to reinforce the concepts hopefully acquired.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Mouse interaction style	One Click	Click move click	Drag and drop
Objetives	Identify Characters	Identify Animals	Identify Countries
Number of elements (difficulty)	3	4	5
Language	English	English	English
Text information	No	No	Yes

Figure 6. Adaptive activity.

The adaptive activities, on the other hand, take into account the educational level, the interaction level (that is, the interaction with the mouse), and the target language.

It is important to account for the difficulty and the mouse interaction style when adapting the activities to the educational level and psychomotor skills of very young learners. The location of the multimedia elements inside these activities is randomly determined to produce a range of variations. In the activity shown in Figure 6, the child is asked to place the character in the corresponding silhouette after having listened to information and descriptive hints.

Likewise, the adaptation will be carried out according to different parameters such as the number of characters, the audio information related to each character, showing the text information or not, and the mouse interaction style.

The audio attached to each character depends on the language and educational level the child is currently at. To illustrate language level considerations, at level 1 the character's name will be identified; for level two the animal type will be chosen and for level 3 the information to be identified is the character's origin. As is to be expected, the textual information only appears at level 3, due to the target age group. Finally, the way of carrying out the activity for each level of dexterity with the mouse will also be adapted (i.e. one click, click move click, drag and drop).

c. Adaptive Games

For the current version of SHAIEx, we have developed 10 different educational games (Agudo, Sánchez, Holguín & Tello, 2007) and for some of them several versions have been implemented.

As an outline example, in the following subparagraphs we describe the interactive games that appear in the didactic unit "Hello" of the present version of SHAIEx. The block of presentation of this unit also changes based on the selected educational level. Thus, in Level 1, the child listens to the name of the mascots of SHAIEx. In Level 2, in addition to the name, also the kind of animal to which each mascot belongs is listened. Finally, in Level 3, the audio includes the country of origin and the nationality of each character.

For all the games and within each educational level, there can be several levels of difficulty. This adaptation parameter forms the number of elements with which the child will have to interact. On the other hand, only at educational level 3 is the image accompanied by textual information.

V. Final discussions

In general terms, Pre-school education is a particularly interesting area for investigating the use of ICT as it offers opportunities to observe the relationship between in-class and informal learning and, in our case, the suitability of combining learner-adapted games and adult-guided instructions.

Our study also reveals the difficulties of the process –e.g. the challenges of mastering computer interactions at this level, the design of adapted material for childhood settings, the process of language acquisition, etc.- while also showing us why these complexities are mastered naturally by children all over the world, regardless of the language they're learning.

Based on the potential advantages derived from the positive attitude children show towards learning foreign languages, SHAIEx aims to design and develop a web-based educational AHS to enhance language learning at early ages by means of individualized hypermedia tasks and through the potential of its multi-sensorial richness. We claim that an adaptive hypermedia system, such as the ongoing SHAIEX project, could adapt to the main features of educational software for young learners and favourably influence the learning of a second language at early ages.

The conclusions drawn from the data obtained as a result of the factor analysis carried out can be summarized as follows:

The language learning process in the design of L2 hypermedia tasks for early ages must be studied in order to tailor designs to meet children's requirements. Hypermedia tasks should be consequently adapted to young learners, meaning that the tasks are adjusted so as to consider the children's cognitive abilities. Though children may not yet have the ability to categorize or accomplish complex tasks such as the ones involving text information, tasks should be simplified, and textual content should be restricted or postponed till higher educational levels.

As for dexterity with the mouse, the different interaction types (click, click-move-click, double click and dragging) may require previous training and extended practice in the case of young learners.

In this context, SHAIEx can provide adaptation in different areas so as to achieve the adaptation and necessary motivation for preschool children to obtain the highest possible benefits from the learning process with technologies. The web-based architecture of the system allows SHAIEx to scale to other educational levels and centralize the adaptation process. The power of SHAIEx as an educational tool also makes it possible to analyze the learning process through the use of ICTs at early ages.

We are aware that computer-based evaluation with primary school children can be an extremely intricate process; however, evaluation constitutes a key point in the design of the SHAIEX Project and one of the future lines of research in order to develop a successful system suited to children's special needs. For this evaluation, we will use the guidelines for usability and fun testing with children –an assessment methodology based on the taxonomy of usability problems proposed and extended to computer game (Barendregt, Bekker, Bouwhuis, & Baauw, 2006).

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Meaningful Digital Storytelling Practices for Learning, Reflection, Creativity and Social Participation

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Book review:

Carmen M. Gregori-Signes & Anna Brígido-Corachán (2015). *Appraising digital storytelling across educational contexts*. Universitat de Valencia.

Digital storytelling (DS) can be considered as a media genre itself. It consists in creating short stories (usually in the form of video between 2 and 5 minutes long) told in first person and using a wide range of digital media and modes of expression. More than twenty years after Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley created them in the US, the practice of DS continues to expand worldwide and in a variety of contexts.

Creating digital stories is neither a simple nor a short activity. On the contrary, it is a complex process that can take several sessions and involves the application of several skills, individually and collaboratively. In the field of education they have come to appreciate this value and have integrated digital storytelling as projects that promote significative and rich learning in people who produce them.

Despite being a book that belongs to a collection of English studies¹, *Appraising Digital Storytelling across Educational Contexts* is an essential book that contains a set of experiences about the application of digital storytelling and its value in different educational contexts and in many ways. It is not just focused on EFL or ESL². Also, it is neither an introductory book on the practice of DS. The editors of this book, professors Anna M. Brígido-Corachán and Carmen Gregori-Signes of the University of Valencia, have brought together different central voices in the field of DS to build a volume that has the virtue of giving a comprehensive and global vision of relevant experiences with DS. These occur in different continents (America, Europe, Asia), in local multicultural contexts and in different educational levels. It is a varied work with meaningful knowledge emerged from real practices that should be interesting to those who integrate or want to integrate DS in their educational praxis.

¹ English in the World Series, University of Valencia Publishing

² Three of the twelve chapters of the book explain experiences using DS in teaching and language learning.

The assessment of these experiences -the *appraisal*- is transversal. On one hand, it explains the historical evolution of the application of DS in different contexts and through different relevant projects. On the other hand, it includes theoretical reflections to understand the elements of DS and its impact. It also describes innovative experiences in different educational stages, emphasizing a diversity of research and study approaches of DS in education.

On a historical level, Joe Lambert's chapter perfectly summarizes the path followed by the *Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS)*, a pioneering organization of the practice of DS. It describes four historical periods of the CDS up to nowadays – a creative phase, a literacy phase, a methodological phase and an ethos phase- where digital stories are understood not only from a broad and a generic point of view (neutral digital and media literacies) but especially from an affective and emotional health perspective. It is a vision of DS as a tool to promote welfare, social labour and the empowerment for social inclusion and democratic participation. It places DS as an ethical activity where the most important value resides in the stories explained by people and not in the technical or technological aspects involved in the creation process. The CDS doesn't lay the emphasis on the *digital* but in the *storytelling* part mostly because, and according to Lambert, the *analog* is not any alternative anymore.

On a more theoretical level, José Luis Rodríguez Illera's chapter analyses personal DS connecting them to autobiographical stories and specify revelation aspects of the privacy of the person who narrates, in the light of Goffman's *Theatrical metaphor* that reveals the pass from the backstage to the frontstage; from the private to the public sphere. It indicates the need to identify those markers used by the narrator as a source of expression -including the typical DS hybrid language that mixes oral and written elements of language- and indicate how to interpret the meanings of the story. This is a key theoretical contribution that sets personal DS as a *technology of the self*.

Dolors Palau-Sampio's chapter identifies and describes the progressive atomization of information in newspaper articles, increasingly lacking of stories that help to their comprehension. As a solution, the chapter recommends to provide a specific time and a space in the news so that the reader is able to identify relevant times and places and make sense of narrative journalistic pieces about facts and events.

Apart from this three more historical and theoretical chapters, the book covers different experiences with DS that provide important information about its implementation in different contexts and that appreciate their educational potential. Bernard Robin and Sara McNeil's chapter summarizes a long career at the University of Houston of work done with students in creating digital stories as learning projects, exploring and identifying their educational potential in different contexts. On the one hand they emphasize the creative potential of DS, and on the other, the digital and information literacy skills fostered, such as search, analysis, synthesis, organization and communication of information.

Grete Jamissen and Kristin Holte Haug of the Oslo University College of Applied Sciences describe an iterative experience that uses DS to bridge theory and practice in a program of professional education for future early childhood teachers that reflect on practices using DS. What we find most relevant is the identification of key issues they found during the project's implementation. In such a project that is aims to scale-up in an institution of higher education it may involve significant changes and cause resistances in the organization.

Collaborative work is very useful in DS projects when searching, creating and sharing stories. Ahn Nguyen and Bernard Robin share their vision of the story as a constructivist process. In other words, it is the construction of a story as a process of negotiation of meaning to overcome challenges and the connection of oneself to the world and to social constructs. Here, this socialization process of constructing a DS is a source of learning. This social aspect can also be useful to ESL students for building stories based on other stories told by members of their community. While learning English as a second language students get immersed in their social contexts.

Following this idea of taking advantage of the collaborative work Irena Maureen of University of Surabaya (Indonesia) highlights the important role of Vygotsky's ZPD where collaboration among students can build confidence in them. She proposes several group exercises to make student's thoughts explicit. For example, making a gallery walk to have a look at the

storyboards created by their peers and using social networks like Twitter, Facebook and blogs to help in the process of socialization of useful information and help-seeking.

As Lina Lee explains in her chapter, using asynchronous discussion tools can enhance the development of skills to reflect on stories. She describes the case where Spanish as a second language students had to create new stories with VoiceThread based on news related to their community. First, results show that creating these stories enhances language learning (both speaking and content learning in Spanish) and second, it develops multi-literacy skills. In these last three experiences the use of digital storytelling in ESL and EFL is described as a good practice for enhancing language learning.

In the last chapter of the book Mark Dunford and Alison Rooke describe the *Extending Creative Practice* project. This project extends the practice of DS with a group of elderly people from different European countries and with different socioeconomic levels. As explained in Jamissen's and Holte Haug's chapter, the implementation of a DS project in an organization first needs a *train the trainers* phase to master the DS methodology so that they can work later on with the final participants: the old people. This project aimed to increase their self-confidence and, at the same time, to promote digital literacy skills so they could be able to participate in the 21st century society and reduce the digital divide. This perspective has a direct connection with the the *Center for Digital Storytelling's* ethical vision of DS –the *ethos*-. This project understands DS as an opportunity for creativity of the elderly, to make their voices be heard, to represent their valuable experiences and to have a mutual understanding of them.

Finally, it catches our attention the case-study described in Yuksel Arslan's, Bernard Robin's and Soner Yildirim's chapter because it describes an unusual experience of DS in education: the use of DS in a Kindergarten class of nineteen 6 year-olds in a school of Ankara (Turkey). How is it possible to work with DS with children who haven't mastered the written language yet? The teacher makes stories from students' ideas, drawings, photographs, etcetera, and even curriculum related. What catches more the attention on the results section is the influence of these stories in increasing the self-confidence of children, and especially as a tool to correct unwanted behaviours. When working with these young kids it is essential the guiding role of the teacher to find the story, posing inferential questions to discuss it, to work on its comprehension with students and to create the artistic and visual materials.

The creation of digital stories involves the activation of many cognitive processes and, therefore, has great value in education. In the twelve chapters of the book there are basic theory reflections that analyse the narrative nature of DS and there is a large selection of quality experiences that set the educational potential of DS in different contexts, whether they are used as a bridge between theory and practice in the university, to enhance language learning as a second language or as a foreign language, to facilitate digital literacy processes among young people and old people or to change attitudes and behaviours in early childhood education. It gives evidence of the importance of collaborative work and facilitating spaces for dialogue to find stories, make them better, tell them and share their meaning. And it is also important to mention the strong ethical and moral side of DS. Digital storytelling lets us find connections with our communities and its stories and discover their values and has the power to give a voice to those who haven't any. This is essential for people to fully participate in society and democracy. According to Lambert in this volume, *extending democracy and extending creativity are tied. Everyone's story counts.*

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Massive Open Online Courses: opportunities and challenges from a student perspective

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Book review:

Haber, J. (2014) *MOOCS. Massachusetts: MIT Series.*

This book is based on an experiment carried out by the author with the aim of analyze and explore trends and experiences on MOOC development. Despite the intention of the author to initiate a discussion in which massive open online courses were neither a panacea to the crisis in education nor the terrifying threat condemned by doomsayers, his point of view is generally optimistic and favourable about the expansion of MOOC. It has to be said that in spite of this opinion, discussion around MOOCs is open and there are clear controversial positions.

The author experiment started to complete the same number of courses one would take to obtain a four-year liberal arts degree in just twelve months using only MOOCs and other forms of free learning.

In the introduction of the book the author exposes that probably MOOC starts when in the summer of 2011 Stanford University decided to open up web-based versions of some of its most popular computer science courses to the world. It was the emergence of companies like Udacity, Coursera, and edX, whose technologies could facilitate classes taken by tens of thousands, that triggered a MOOC movement that had previously been relegated to theoretical frameworks or experimental courses. These companies show a type of technological utopianism which say, for example, that in ten fifty years there would be only ten institutions in the world delivering higher education.

As the author expound, from the beginning boosters and critics of MOOCs could use data to support their pro and anti-MOOC arguments. For critics, high attrition rates were an easy target, given that fewer than 10 percent of people who signed up for a MOOC tended to take it to completion. From teacher point of view, the amount of work involved and the challenges inherent in trying to teach tens of thousands of students simultaneously became the basis for a new set of concerns. Moreover, with no clear way to ensure that a student enrolled in a MOOC was the one actually doing the work, it was difficult to claim that any massive open course constitute the equivalent of a traditional semester-long college class. On the other side, and as the author exposed, it's difficult to argue that no good can come out for the world's most successful colleges and universities making classes taught by skilled and enthusiastic professors to share their knowledge available to anyone with an Internet connection.

The second chapter of the book attempts to place MOOCs into a broader context of trends in traditional and online learning. When looking for precedents, one could go back to the protestant reformation in XVIth century Europe when the printing press or to correspondence courses first popularized in the 1840s. Broadcast media, first radio in the

1920s and then television in the 1950s also created opportunities. Most recently, the first course in 2008 to earn the title of a MOOC was “connectivism and connective knowledge” taught by Stephen Downes and George Siemens. This connectivist model sees knowledge and learning through the lens of how information becomes incorporated into the brain. Moreover all material generated by the professors was optional, with students free to use what they liked, create and share their own curriculum materials. The term MOOC was created by David Cormier who helped facilitate Downe’s and Siemens’s connective learning project and coined the term during an EdTechTalk interview. People involved with some of the earlier experiments in online learning use the term xMOOC to distinguish the newer massive courses from the connectivist MOOCs (now referred to as cMOOCs) that came before.

In the third chapter the author take a look at all of the parts of a course and how they fit together in order to answer the question of what constitutes a MOOC.

- When the content of a class will be consumed by thousands of students of differing abilities the rules that define meaning when these elements are linked together in a traditional classroom may no longer apply.
- Regarding lectures, research based on evidence of performance might demonstrate the effectiveness of the lecture format; MOOC developers have taken to heart the importance of breaking lecture material into shorter segments.
- The other issue that MOOC creators have had to contend with is the notion of openness, like intellectual property rules. Professors have been experimenting with different methods to make required part of their courses in ways that do not leave institutions vulnerable to copyright-related lawsuits and most easily applied in courses where reading material is already publically available in legal or free formats such as offering students time-limited electronic editions of textbooks, for example.
- Another component of the MOOC courses is the online discussion. MOOC developers have tried a number of methods to support community formation, for example most courses kick off with a forum, online conferencing, discussion forums, “office hour” videos or “learning” hubs”. Beside these examples, there is a general consensus that MOOCs still need to find the means to create intimacy within classes taken by thousands of students.
- Regarding assessment, it often consists of short quizzes, multiple-choice form, automatically scored exams. All these techniques are created with the assumption that classes consisting of tens of thousands of students require evaluation to be performed by someone other than a professor. In this sense, most assessment of subjective material is done via the mechanism of peer grading. As a final comment of the reflection, the author maintains that until challenging assessments designed to verify and reinforce learning become a higher priority, MOOCs may continue to be perceived as a lighter alternative to what currently takes place in the less massively enrolled physical classroom.
- In reference to the course organization, there are two approaches to scheduling, with courses put on a calendar in which students engage with the same material each week until a fixed deadline is reached or the “on demand” courses, in which students can start the course whenever they like, with no fixed deadline for completing the material.
- Regarding the certification and payment, especially in those MOOCs carried out by universities is another controversial issue. In the case of Stanford University, the institution and the course author came to an agreement that allowed the university’s name to appear on a carefully worded certificate of completion stating explicitly that the online course should not be considered equivalent to an actual paid-for Stanford for-credit course.

All this variability needs to be taken into account when entering the fiery debate over whether or not MOOCs should be treated as the equivalent of traditional college courses.

In the fourth chapter the author explores the issues and controversies related with MOOCs. Although MOOC supporters rarely mention them, dropout rates in these courses are about 90 percent. And this opens a question: online sign-ups should be treated as representing the same level of commitment as enrolling a traditional college course? The author of the book explains that MOOCs are free and the process for signing up for one involves little more than providing an e-mail address and password. Regarding this, Coursera's statistics make differences in between: number of enrolled users, number of unique students who logged into the site at least one after sign-up and active students last week.

While providing younger students access to MOOCs remains an important goal for MOOC creators, as the data exposed in the book shows, the natural audience for MOOCs seems to be an older and more educated cohort interested in advancing their learning. As the author suggests, maybe those data change if students could obtain something with genuine "cash value" in the educational marketplace for completing a MOOC class, such as formally recognized college credit. In this sense, the author highlights that the wide variation in level of demand emphasizes the importance of independent accreditation when determining formal college course equivalence for a MOOC.

The fifth chapter is focused on the research and experimentation taking place within individual massive classes and what such a culture of experimentation might contribute to the overall MOOC project. The first research is related with statistical data on how many students are enrolled, what actions students do or how much time they spend doing different activities in the MOOC platform. Other research is related with the demographics surrounding the student body of a MOOC course. In addition to these descriptive studies, researches are also looking at new ways of defining educational behavior based on the unique environments of large-scale. As the author concludes, most of the research into MOOC has delivered what MOOC supporters would categorize as good news. But other researches demonstrated, for example, failure rates much higher in MOOC based courses than in conventional classes on the same subjects.

Another question MOOC developers are trying to answer through experimentation is about the business model of this courses and how to get these free learning tools to turn a profit. Apart from providers such as Udacity, Coursera or edX there are other economic players with a stake in the success or failure of MOOCs, notably the colleges and universities who create the courses. Moreover, new platforms providers or LMS providers explore how to open up courses on their system to the world.

As Haber explains, much of the discussion of MOOCs as a potential substitute for a traditional college education grows out of concerns that colleges and universities are pricing themselves out of a market and will need to be replaced with different, less-expensive alternatives. The MOOC phenomenon is also analyzed as an alternative for the spiraling problem of colleges and universities related with a debt bubble that looms as the next great financial crisis

Regarding the pedagogical experiments, the final results are likely to demonstrate that massive open learning is good in some situations and bad in others, the academic drive for answers combined with the scientist's readiness to accept and even celebrate negative results should be used to guide MOOCs to the point where they can have the greatest positive impact.

Finally, the sixth chapter explores the future of MOOCs. As the author concludes, there is continuing and legitimate concern over how far MOOCs or any other technology-based educational solution should be allowed to impinge on existing educational structures. Moreover, despite the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley the real debate about the efficacy of massive open learning is taking place within the academy. A number of commentators clearly saw them as an alternative to traditional colleges and universities that were becoming increasingly expensive and decreasingly demanding. However, the author qualifies as understandable that educators have expressed concerns over the quality, consistency, and academic rigor of the growing number of alternatives to institution-based classroom learning, pointing out how uncontrolled diversification could end up watering down the educational and economic values of a diploma.

Talking about "nontraditional learners" Heber notes that when MOOCs are implemented in atypical learning environments, they are often part of a blended learning environments when students watch videos together in the same physical location and then spend the rest of

class discussing the content. This “atypical environments” are usually rural areas, areas with few hours of electricity, etc.

In the closure of the book, the author explains in detail their aim to achieve a philosophical grade only completing MOOCs. After this experience, Heber suggests that if a program allowed him to complete that many courses in one year rather than four, the online courses he took must be easier than the ones someone would go through in a traditional four-year program. Beside this, he recognizes that after this experience he has now enough knowledge on modern philosophical concepts to use them in the analysis of this book. And “might it be fair to consider myself the equivalent of a graduating senior with a BA in philosophy who is now capable of applying important philosophical principles to different subjects and different aspects of life?” The discussion is open

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EDITORIAL

La Gamificación educativa. Una alternativa para la enseñanza creativa

Educative Gamification. An alternative to creative learning

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Educar hoy significa mirar no solo a los contenidos que las legislaciones de cada país indican que se han de desarrollar en cada una de los diferentes y etapas educativas, conlleva poner la vista en los nuevos recursos digitales que a lo largo de las últimas décadas se han ido generando. Estos son numerosos, y levantan tanto pasiones como odios, así encontramos blogs, wikis, flashmobs, cazas del tesoro, infografías, etc. que se emplean de forma dinámica por los docentes (Marín, González y Sampedro, 2014; Martín, Reche y Vilches, 2015; Molina, Valenciano & Valencia-Peri, 2015) que tratan de aportar un nuevo aire a la metodología de las aulas.

Uno de esos recursos, que va haciéndose poco a poco un hueco entre los recursos tecnológicos que los profesores emplean en sus dinámicas de aula es la gamificación. Pensada como una estrategia que introduzca la conectividad y el compromiso por consolidar una comunidad, se va haciendo un hueco, poco a poco en el ámbito educativo, pudiendo hablar hoy de una línea específica de Gamificación educativa, donde los entornos formales introducen recursos propios de los no formales con el fin de potenciar un aprendizaje significativo.

Hablar hoy de "gamificación educativa", supone hacerlo de una tendencia basada en la unión del concepto de ludificación y aprendizaje. La gamificación propiamente dicha trata de potenciar procesos de aprendizaje basados en el empleo del juego, en este caso de los videojuegos para el desarrollo de procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje efectivos, los cuales faciliten la cohesión, integración, la motivación por el contenido, potenciar la creatividad de los individuos.

Por otra parte, no queremos identificar gamificación educativa con ludificación educativa, ya que aquella trata de vincular conceptos del currículo con el propio proceso de aprendizaje que los individuos desarrollan a lo largo de todo su proceso de formación. Se han de superar visiones negativas del empleo de los videojuegos en general pues una de las mayores potencialidades de estos dentro de la educación es despertar la curiosidad por conocer, por desarrollar habilidades, reforzar la autoestima, el valor uno mismo y de la comunidad,...

Pero, ¿cómo se está introduciendo en las aulas?, ¿están formados los futuros docentes para su empleo? ¿Realmente potencian el trabajo colaborativo y cooperativo así como las comunidades de aprendizaje?

Encontramos la respuesta para responder a estos interrogantes a través de 8 artículos que centra su atención en este tema.

El monográfico que a continuación presentamos se encuentra organizado en aportaciones de corte teórico y de línea investigadora que tratan de llamar la atención del lector sobre la relevancia del empleo de los videojuegos de manera educativa en las aulas.

Así dentro del primer bloque encontramos el trabajo firmado por Figueroa -*Using gamification to enhance second language learning*- quien nos acerca la enseñanza de las segundas lenguas a través de este medio. Para ello nos hace un recorrido sobre las diversas metodologías que podemos emplear para el desarrollo de los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje de otro idioma para pasar a presentar este vinculado a los videojuegos, indicando la necesidad e vincular este proceso a través de tres categorías (leaders, prizes or awards y achievements). Igualmente indica que para que el binomio L2-gamificación tenga éxito los factores personales así como la motivación son los elementos principales para que la adquisición de la segunda lengua tenga éxito. En esta línea teórica o reflexiva encontramos la aportación de Sampedro y McMullin titulado *Videojuegos para la educación inclusiva*. Las autoras ponen el acento en la necesidad de emplear estos recursos para el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva real,. Para ello ponen de manifiesto como los videojuegos sirven para la inclusión ya que proporcionan una visión de equidad, socialización e igualdad, necesarias para la inclusión de los individuos en la sociedad.

El segundo bloque de aportaciones, a su vez, puede ser organizado en dos subgrupos, artículos cuya población objeto de estudio son estudiantes universitarios y los que se centran en estudiantes de otros niveles educativos. Centrando nuestra atención en este último, por ser la única que encontramos referida a estudiantes de 3º y 5º de Educación Primaria y de 4º de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria elaborado por Saorín, Meier, de la Torre, Rivero y Melian, y titulado *Blokify: Juego de modelado e impresión en 3D quienes proponen en tableta digital para el aprendizaje de vistas normalizadas y perspectivas*, el aprendizaje de las figuras en tres dimensiones a través del empleo del videojuego Blokify, el cual presenta similitudes en su arquitectura de desarrollo a Minecraft. Tras la implementación del mismo con los estudiantes anteriormente indicados han podido concluir es una herramienta que ayuda a desarrollar las habilidades espaciales, que potencia la motivación por el uso de las tecnologías en el aula, y aportan un dato llamativo, los estudiantes de Educación Primaria mostraron habilidades que les permitieron llegar a niveles de diseño de figuras propios de otros niveles educativos más altos.

Centrándonos en la figura del estudiante universitario encontraremos 5 artículos, 3 de ellos centrados en la línea educativa y 2 en la psicológica. Así el realizado por Villalustre y del Moral, titulado *Gamificación: estrategias para optimizar el proceso de aprendizaje y la adquisición de competencias en contextos universitarios*, refleja los resultados alcanzados en su investigación llevada a cabo con estudiantes de Grado de Pedagogía. Con estos las investigadoras tratan de determinar si los videojuegos de simulación pueden junto con su empleo a través de otros herramientas digitales tales como blogs, wikis y redes sociales pueden fomentar el trabajo colaborativo. Los resultados han demostrado que los estudiantes participantes consideran que sí,

no obstante indican que su formación digital en otras aplicaciones no es tan amplia como se pensaba, dada su edad y formación previa. En esta línea encontramos el trabajo *Strategies ok work collaborative in the classroom through the design of video games*, de Muñoz, Rubio y Cruz, quienes proponen el diseño de videojuegos a través del programa CourseLab a los estudiantes de Grado de Educación Infantil. Al igual que el estudio de Villalustre y del Moral, los resultados reflejan que el empleo de los videojuegos en las aulas como estrategia metodológica puede fomentar el trabajo colaborativo entre los miembros del aula, salvo que este estará mediado por la motivación para el empleo de los estudiantes. El último artículo que estudia a los alumnos universitarios titulado *Can gamification be introduced within primary class?* es el escrito por Marín, López y Maldonado; las autoras estudian las actitudes que los maestros en formación inicial tienen ante este elemento como recurso para ser empleado en el aula. Al igual que en otros estudios, los alumnos de Grado de Educación Primaria participantes en el estudio identifican que ellos aumentan la autonomía, autoconfianza y autoestima de los estudiantes.

En lo que se refiere a la vertiente psicológica encontraremos el artículo firmado por Uz y Cagiltay (*Social interactions and games*) y el de Cleghorn y Griffiths (*Why do gamers buy 'virtual assets'? An insight in to the psychology behind purchase behaviour*). El primero de ellos desarrolla su estudio en la Universidad de Turquía, en ella nos acercan desde la perspectiva del alumnado y atendiendo al género, el tipo de personalidad de estos y su preferencia en el tipo de juego. Así los resultados preliminares arrojan que los alumnos prefieren jugar en red con sus familiares y amigos, que los alumnos más extrovertidos son los que más horas pasan jugando y que los hombres emplean más tiempo que las mujeres en ellos. En lo que se refiere al trabajo de Cleghorn y Griffiths, los autores se preguntan sobre las razones que llevan a un jugador a gastar su dinero en adquirir elementos para poder avanzar en el juego. Los resultados alcanzados girarán en torno a las variables: motivación, los beneficios sociales alcanzados y el impacto psicológico que para el sujeto implica.

Todos los artículos que conforman este monográfico presentan un aspecto en común, la motivación del sujeto para su empleo. Es por ello que consideramos que nuestras expectativas en cuando a su empleo en las aulas debe ser abierta y favorable, tratando de eliminar su halo de negatividad y tratando de aportar y obtener de ellos todos los aspectos positivos que poseen.

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Social Interactions and Games

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Abstract

Digital games have become popular due to great technological improvements in recent years. They have been increasingly transformed from co-located experiences into multi-played, socially oriented platforms (Herodotou, 2009). Multi-User Online Games provide the opportunity to create a social environment for friendships and strengthen the relationships. However, several researchers supported the idea that gamers seeking meaningful relationships within a game environment might have problems in forming meaningful relationships in the real environment (as cited in Redmond, 2010). This study was conducted with the sample of 168 university students to explore the social interactions in and out of game environment in terms of personality type, gender and game preferences. As a result of the study, it was found that participants mostly prefer playing multi-player games with their real life friends and family members. While they tend to make friends in game environments, they do not prefer sharing sensitive issues with their gaming friends. Moreover; students who reported themselves more extraverted, spend more hours in games. This paper contributes to the debates on the impact of games on social interactions of players in and out of the game environment.

Keywords

Games, Extraversion, Social interaction, Multi-player games.

I. Introduction

Computer games which range from simple text-based games to complex 3D graphics and virtual worlds have been strongly widespread over the past decade. In the large range of games, there are many variations: First-person shooter games, strategy games, massively multiplayer online games and so on. The technological developments of the past 25 years, in particularly the internet, have revolutionized gaming. Due to greater technological improvements, digital games have been increasingly transformed from single, co-located experiences into socially oriented, multi-played platforms (Herodotou, 2009). Multiplayer online games have become popular, especially as many players spend most of their time by interacting with other online players.

Massively Multi-User Online Games (MMOGs) give opportunities for users to interact and form relationships through avatars. In these environments, there are multiple tasks or quests that need to be accomplished by different characters with various skills (Cole et al., 2007). Examples of such games are World of Warcraft, Final Fantasy, Xbox Live.

MMOG gamers interact socially in the game environment with other gamers and spend huge amounts of time while forming relationships and some of these relationships may carry on the real life relationships (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). On the other hand, several researchers claim that gamers forming relationships within a gaming environment might have problems in forming relationships in the real environment, because they may find the relationships in online environments much safer (Peters and Malesky, 2008). Some of the previous studies claim that MMOG players are introverted and lack social interaction; however, some believe that forming relationships in these environments can be accepted as the same as face-to-face relationships (Stiles, 2010). Jeng and Teng (2008) applied Five-factor model of Personality to online game play to investigate relationship between personality type and motivation for playing online games. Extraversion which is one of these five factors was identified as the strongest motivation predictor for playing online games (Park et al., 2011). This study wants to investigate experiences and social interactions of gamers in gaming environment and compare them with their real lives by taking into account gender difference. In addition, it is aimed to explore which correlations exist between personality type and gaming characteristics of gamers.

II. Literature Review

MMOGs have become popular during recent years. According to gender studies, these games are generally preferred by male gamers. Jansz and Martens (2005) noted that 96.5% of the participants in an online game study were male. However, recent studies showed that female gamers are on the rise. Interestingly, Lenhart et al. (2008) did a study by national survey of U.S. participants and found that the number of female MMOG gamers were nearly the same as the number of male gamers.

MMOGs gamers prefer spending time in game environment instead of socializing in the real environment which can be labeled as "anti-social" or "introverted" (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). Yee (2006) did a research on MMOGs and stated that they allowed new forms of social interaction and identity. According to Krotoski (2004), MMOGs encouraged group interaction and involvement which results in personal empowerment and good relationships. It is labeled as social interaction

because gamers collaborate and accomplish common tasks (Cole and Griffiths, 2007). MMOGs also have multiple quests that gamers need to accomplish them collaboratively.

Online gamers can form meaningful relationships with other gamers and alter these relationships (Jansz & Martens, 2005). Cole and Griffiths (2007) made a study with 912 gamers and found that 76.2% of the males and 74.7% of the females made good friends within the game environment. Digital games can lead to a social environment in which gamers interact and form meaningful relationships (Krotoski, 2004; Weibel et al., 2007). Females and males differ in digital worlds in terms of forming relationship. Cole and Griffiths (2007) found that male gamers tended to make friends in a game environment. On the other hand, female gamers were more likely to form relationships in real environment.

On the other hand, according to a qualitative study, it was found that gamers preferred playing for hours in isolation, putting their social relations with friends and family members in game environment (Jansz & Martens, 2005). Cole and Griffiths (2007) also reported that 80% of the 912 gamers preferred playing games with their friends and family members, however in the same study it was demonstrated that only one quarter (26.3%) of 912 gamers played MMOGs with family and real-life friends. Playing games with family members may result in more cooperation and relatedness.

On the other hand, in the study of Peters and Malesky (2008) it was found that gamers who look for social connections within a game environment might have problems in forming social connections in the real environment, thus they might avoid face to face connections. In their study among players of World of Warcraft, it was found out that some gamers might have problems with rejection in the real world, thus they tend to seek social connection in a safer environment.

Several researchers claimed that personal traits play important role in game preferences and social interactions (Sheeks and Birchmeier, 2007; Park et al., 2011; Stiles, 2010). Sheeks and Birchmeier (2007) supported the idea that individuals, who showed higher levels of shyness, might demonstrate online friends "better quality friendships". On the other hand, according to Park et al. (2011), "agreeableness" and "extraversion" were identified as "strong motivation predictors" for playing online games. Extraversion which is one of the five core traits is characterized by "sociability", "talkativeness" (Jeng and Teng, 2008). Fang and Zhu (2011) also supported that digital gamers who had high extraversion score would like to play a game that requires many social interactions. If people support the idea that the game they played provides opportunities for social interactions and if they highly value these, then they will be motivated to play this type of game (Park et al., 2010).

Based on these previous studies, one of the reasons some gamers spend more time playing the game can be to avoid face-to-face relationships or interactions. On the other hand, gamers seeking social connections within a game environment might have problems forming relationships in the real world, and MMOGs may encourage group interaction and involvement resulting in good friendships. Besides, teenagers who feel close to their family members would like to play games with their family members or friends more frequently in order to share the experience with real world relationships. Extraversion as a personal trait can play role in game preference, thus the satisfaction of extraverted people obtained from playing MMOGs can motivate them to play and spend many hours in these digital environments.

The purpose of this research is to explore the social interactions that occur both within and outside of games. The development of virtual friendships can be very enjoyable for gamers, and they sometimes lead to serious real-life relationships. Another purpose of this research is to explore which correlations exist between personality type and gaming characteristics of gamers.

III. Method

a. Participants

The sample consisted of 168 university students from two state universities in Turkey. 70% were male ($n=118$) and 30% were female ($n = 50$). The first part of results explores general game preferences of all participants. In the following part, analyses were carried out with 114 participants (68%) who play computer games. The participants have age between 18 and 26 years, with the mean age of 21.8 years. Of the participants, 74% ($n =124$) were from Computer Education and Instructional Technology Department, whereas 26% ($n =44$) were from Civil Engineering Department.

b. Materials

i. Questionnaire of Social Interactions in MMOGs

The questionnaire is adopted version of Social Interactions in MMOGs developed by Cole and Griffiths (2007). The items were translated into Turkish and the questionnaire was sent to three different scientific experts in order to be evaluated and the last revisions were made using the responses and comments of the experts. The questionnaire consists of three sections which ask questions about demographic information, friendships and social interactions in game and playing games with real life friends. The items in the questionnaire are Yes/No questions.

Survey of Computer game playing characteristics and preferences

The questionnaire of "Computer game playing characteristics and preferences" developed for Turkish participants by Durdu, Hotamaroğlu and Cagiltay (2004) was used to explore the game preferences of the participants. The survey consists of 12 items which ask game preferences and characteristics of players with Yes/No questions and numerical values. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to measure internal consistency of the survey and was found .80.

Eyenc Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S)

The questionnaire is developed by Karancı, Dirik and Yorulmaz (2007) which is short version of Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) and translated into Turkish by Bayar (1983) for use among adults. High internal consistency scores (cronbach alpha=.78) and acceptable test-retest reliability ($r=.84$), the Turkish version of the questionnaire is reliable. This form consists of three indices of extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and each contains 6 items. In this study, only the indice of extraversion was used, because previous studies demonstrated that extraversion as a personal trait was the strongest predictor for multiplayer online games (Jeng & Teng, 2008; Stiles, 2010; Park et al., 2011). Participants answered the items as "yes (1)" and "no (0)". The score for extraversion was between 0 and 6. Extraversion is characterized by "being outgoing, talkative,

high on positive affect (feeling good), and in need of external stimulation" (Karancı, Dirik and Yorulmaz , 2007).

IV. Results

a. Hours played per week

While 32 % ($n= 54$) of the participants did not play any computer games, 68% ($n=114$) of the participants reported that they play computer games. The mean average time spent playing per week was 9 hours ($SD = 9.18$).

Independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare hours played per week for males and females. Significant difference was found between male and female participants in terms of hours played per week, $t(434) = 1.62$, $p = .02$, $< .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Males ($M=7.44$, $SD=9.5$) played significantly more hours than females ($M=2.98$, $SD=4.79$) as seen in Table 1.

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
<i>Hours played per week</i>	Female	50	2.9800	4.79579	.67823
	Male	118	7.4407	9.55286	.87941

Table 1. Hours played per week

b. Game Types Preference

Games were categorized in three types which are single-player, multiplayer and both of them. Game type preferences of the players are shown in Table 2.

<i>Game Type</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Single Player</i>	38	33
<i>Multi Player</i>	24	21
<i>Both of them</i>	52	46
<i>Total</i>	114	100

Table 2. Game type preference

In terms of gender, 82% ($n=21$) of the male gamers preferred multiplayer games, however only 26% ($n=3$) of the female gamers preferred multi-player games as seen in Table 3.

Game Type	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Single Player	15	23	38
Multi Player	21	3	24
Both	47	5	52
Total	83	31	114

Table 3. Game type preference and gender

c. Feeling more yourself within the game

While 18 % ($n=21$) of the players felt more themselves within the game than they could in real life, 82 % ($n=93$) of the players stated that they did not feel themselves within the game as it is shown in Table 4.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	18
No	93	82
Total	114	100

Table 4. Feeling more yourself in the game

Chi-square analysis was conducted to reveal difference between “feeling more yourself in game” and gender. Significant difference was found between male and female players in terms of feeling more yourself in games ($\chi^2=3.87, p=.03, p<.05$). Male players felt more themselves in games than female players (see Table 5).

	Feeling more yourself in game		Total
	Yes	No	
Male	14	64	78
Female	1	29	30
Total	15	93	108

Table 5. Feeling more yourself in the game and Gender

In addition, the relationship between “hours played per week” and “feeling more yourself in the game” was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was no significant relationship between the two variables ($p=.11, p>.05$).

d. Friendships within Multiplayer Games

According Table 6, 57 % ($n=43$) of the multiplayer gamers ($n=76$) made friends within the game. While 62% ($n=42$) of the male gamers reported that they made friend in the game, only one female gamer reported that she made friend in the game.

		<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
<i>Make Friend</i>	<i>Yes</i>	42	1	43
	<i>No</i>	26	7	33
<i>Total</i>		68	8	76

Table 6. Make friend and gender

In addition, 51% ($n=22$) of the players who made friends in the games met in real life, and that 49% ($n=21$) of them did not meet in real life. Whereas 14% ($n=6$) of the gamers who made friends within the game discussed sensitive issues with their online gaming friends, 86 % ($n=37$) of the gamers did not discuss sensitive issues with their online friends.

Correlation analysis was conducted to display the relationship between number of hours played per week and number of friends within the game. The results showed that there was no correlation between the number of hours played per week and the number of friends within the game ($p=.70$, $p>.05$).

e. Playing multi-player games with real-life friends and family members

The results showed that 85% ($n=65$) of the multiplayer gamers played with their friends or family members. In terms of gender, 88% ($n=60$) of the male multi-player gamers played with real life friends and family members as it is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Gender and playing with real life friends-family members

		<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
<i>Play with real life friends-family</i>	<i>Yes</i>	60	5	65
	<i>No</i>	8	3	11
<i>Total</i>		68	8	76

f. Personality Type and Games

The results of correlation analysis showed that there was a significant correlation between extraversion scores (EPQR) and hours played per week ($p=.01$, $p<.05$). The people who played

more hours in a week had higher extraversion scores. There correlation between tow variables was positive but weak ($r=.19$).

The one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of game preference on EPQR scores. Game types were single-player, multi-player and both. There was no significant difference at the $p<.05$ level in EPQR scores for the three game groups: $F(2,112) = 1.09$, $p=.33$, $\eta^2 = .01$ as it is shown in Table 8.

EPQR	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	8.197	2	4.098	1.093	.339
Within Groups	416.268	112	3.750		
Total	424.465	114			

Table 8. ANOVA table of game type preference and EPQR scores

Finally, One way between groups ANOVA was conducted to explore significant differences among reason for game preference (competing, social communication, fantasy, challenge, relax) in terms of EPQR scores. There was no significant difference at the $p<.05$ level in EPQR scores for the five groups: $F(4,100) = .66$, $p=.61$, $\eta^2 = .03$ as it is shown in Table 9.

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	10.737	4	2.684	.669	.616
Within Groups	293.058	110	4.014		
Total	303.795	114			

Table 9. ANOVA Table of reason for game preference and EPQR scores

V. Conclusion

Male gamers spend more hours in games according to female gamers and they mostly prefer multiplayer games (Jansz and Martens, 2005; Yee, 2006). However, recent studies demonstrated that the number of female multi player game players is on the rise (Lenthart et al., 2008; Cole & Griffiths, 2007). In this study, it was found that male gamers spend significantly more hours in games according to female gamers and they mostly prefer to play multiplayer games or both of game types (single player and multiplayer). On the other hand, females mostly prefer to play single player games. This study is conducted in 2013 and game preferences according to gender still have the same tendency.

Although mean average time spent playing per week is 9; 82 % ($n=93$) of the players stated that they did not feel themselves within the game. Interestingly; this result varies by gender, thus male gamers felt themselves in the game more according to female gamers. This finding might be because of game preferences of male gamers. Multiplayer games have multiple tasks to complete

and require large number of players study together to accomplish these goals which make them engage in game world and feel themselves in the games.

Multiplayer gamers can be labeled as anti-social; those players prefer to spend their most of the time in game rather than socializing in real life with real friends. However, according to Yee, 2006; Krotoski, 2004, Jansz & Martens, 2005; these games encourage group interaction and leads to for new forms of social interaction by giving opportunity to create meaningful relationships with other players. In this study, while 57 % of the multiplayer gamers made friends in the game, 51% of them met these friends in real life. On the other hand, 86 % of them did not prefer to discuss sensitive issues with their online friends. Although nearly half of the gamers made friends in the game, they did not prefer to discuss sensitive issues with their online friends. It is not possible to claim that playing multiplayer games always result in meaningful relationships.

Gaming environment may allow family numbers to come closer to each other in a different format that foster "togetherness" and "teamwork" (Kubey & Larson, 1990; Jansz & Martens, 2005). In this study, 85% of the gamers demonstrated that they play games with real life friends and family members. In another study by Cole and Griffiths (2007), while 80% of the gamers prefer playing with real life friends and family members, only 26.3% of them play with them. Inconsistency of the results can be because of the discrepancies between the study groups.

Peters and Malesky (2008) supported the idea that gamers who look for social connections within a game environment might have problems in forming relationships in the real environment. Individuals can avoid face to face interactions, relationships or rejections and they tend to form online relationships which are much more safer (Sheeks and Birchmeier, 2007). On the other hand, several researchers demonstrated that extraversion as a personal trait is the strongest motivation predictor for playing multiplayer games (Park et al., 2011; Stiles, 2010). In this study, it was found that the people who played more hours in a week had higher extraversion scores. In other words, player who reported them extraverted spend more hours in games. This result supports the findings of Sheeks and Birchmeier, 2007; Park et al., 2011; Stiles, 2010. On the other hand, no significant difference was found between extraversion scores of gamers based on their reason for game preference (competing, social communication, fantasy, challenge, relax, refreshing effect) and also their game preference (single player, multiplayer or both of them).

To sum up, male gamers spend significantly more hours in games according to female gamers. On the other hand, while nearly half of the gamers prefer to meet their game friends in real life, they mostly do not tend to talk sensitive issues with them. In terms of personal trait; extraverted people tends to spend more hours in games however there is no correlation between game preference and extraversion. The idea that "individuals, who demonstrated higher levels of shyness, might demonstrate online friends "better quality friendships"" is disregarded in this study. In conclusion, gamers tend to play online multi-player games and they mostly prefer playing with their real life friends and family members. It cannot be claimed that multiplayer games are the environments for shy or introverted people who cannot make social relationships in real life. Game environment is the space for gamers to interact and collaborate with their real life friends and family members, thus they mostly prefer to play with them.

In future studies, the relationships of the players can be explored elaborately. Qualitative research design can be conducted to examine the meaningfulness of the relationships. Social interactions in

games and out of games can be explored in terms of different variables such as educational background, social status, relationships with family members, age and so on.

One limitation of this research is the possible defensiveness of the participants. Defensiveness is one of the problems in self-report studies. In the present study, participants might want to be seen extraverted, so that they may have pointed out fewer problems than that they really have. The other limitation of the study is the participants are from only two departments which are Computer Education and Instructional Technology and Civil Engineering. Convenient sampling was used and in the future studies the study can be replicated with students from various majors. The last limitation of the study is the number of female participants. Analyses run comparing female and male participants are of very limited validity, given the extremely low number of females.

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Gamificación: Estrategia para optimizar el proceso de aprendizaje y la adquisición de competencias en contextos universitarios

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Resumen

La práctica sobre Diseño de Proyectos Socio-educativos (Grado de Pedagogía) adoptó como estrategia formativa un juego de simulación social, donde los estudiantes (N=161) debían elaborar colaborativamente un plan de intervención para promover el desarrollo sostenible en un contexto rural. Distribuidos aleatoriamente en tres grupos, con variantes relativas a las herramientas digitales utilizadas para colaborar: 1) *blogs*, 2) *wikis*, ó 3) redes sociales, y tras su realización, se les solicitó que identificaran -mediante un cuestionario- las competencias genéricas que consideraron haber adquirido y/o consolidado con el proceso de gamificación. El análisis comparativo entre los distintos grupos y el contraste de hipótesis correspondiente evidenció diferencias significativas. Los que utilizaron las wikis y redes sociales percibieron un incremento en su competencia para la *comunicación escrita y sus habilidades para recoger, organizar y gestionar información* con la simulación propuesta. Igualmente, los que carecían de experiencia para elaborar proyectos colaborativos con el uso de TIC vieron mejorada su competencia digital. Además, se constató que la utilización de mecánicas de juego al servicio del aprendizaje no sólo incrementó su motivación y nivel de satisfacción con la realización del proyecto solicitado, sino que potenció la adquisición y desarrollo de competencias genéricas claves.

Palabras clave

Gamificación, competencias, aprendizaje por proyectos, nivel de satisfacción, herramientas digitales, trabajo colaborativo

Gamification: strategies to optimize learning process and the acquisition of skills in university contexts

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Abstract

Practice on Design of Socio-Educational Projects (Degree of Education) training strategy adopted as a game of social simulation, where students (N = 161) were to design their own project of sustainable development in rural areas was adopted. They were divided into three groups, which introduced variants in relation to digital tools used for collaboration: 1) blog, 2) wikis, and 3) social networking, and after completing its realization is asked to identify, through a questionnaire, generic competences considered to have acquired and / or consolidated with gamification process in which they actively participated. The comparative analysis between groups and contrast corresponding hypothesis showed significant difference. Those who used the wikis and social networks perceived an increase in their competences for written communication and skills to collect, organize and manage information with simulation. Similarly, students who lacked experience in developing collaborative projects with the use of ICT improved their digital competition. Furthermore, it was found that the use of game mechanics in support of learning not only increased their motivation and level of satisfaction with the project, but the acquisition and development of key generic competences are enhanced.

Keywords

Gamification, competences, project learning, satisfaction, digital tools, collaborative work.

I. Introducción

En los últimos años se ha consolidado la tendencia de aprovechar los componentes motivadores propios de los escenarios de juego trasladándolos a contextos formales no lúdicos, fenómeno denominado *gamificación* -traducido literalmente del inglés-, con el fin de implicar a los usuarios en procesos complejos y predisponerlos favorablemente hacia la adquisición de aprendizajes de diversa índole. Distintos campos han adoptado esta estrategia con fines variados: modelado de la conducta de los usuarios en tanto consumidores a través del *advergaming* (Méndiz-Noguero, 2010), para activar su conciencia social (Quintana, 2014), como práctica formativa en el ámbito empresarial (Varela, 2013), en la enseñanza de otras lenguas (Mazur, Rzepka & Araki, 2011), etc.; convirtiendo a las personas en jugadores activos, sumergiéndoles en entornos lúdicos y enfrentándoles a retos y misiones atractivas que les envuelven emocionalmente, aumentando su nivel de compromiso con las tareas propuestas e incrementando su participación en actividades diversas, utilizando estrategias similares a las adoptadas en los juegos competitivos.

En este sentido, se puede considerar que los contextos formativos están *gamificados* en tanto se produce una transposición de sesiones de aprendizaje a un ambiente semejante al de un videojuego, en donde existen premios o *badges*, se asignan puntos, se superan diferentes niveles, etc., de forma parecida a como sucede en los videojuegos (Deterding, Sicart, Nacke, O'Hara & Dixon, 2011). Si bien el término *gamificación*, genéricamente hace referencia a la aplicación de mecánicas de juego a ámbitos que no son propiamente de juego, con el fin de estimular tanto la competencia como la cooperación entre jugadores (Kapp, 2012), llevado al terreno educativo, puede identificarse con el diseño de escenarios de aprendizaje integrados por propuestas de ingeniosas y atractivas actividades que promuevan la resolución de tareas de forma innovadora y colaborativa (Lee & Hammer, 2011), alentando a la superación de retos y al logro de nuevas cotas de competencia para los estudiantes.

Más concretamente, la *gamificación* referida al nivel universitario remite a aquellas iniciativas orientadas a incrementar la motivación de los discentes a partir de la propuesta de experiencias de juego en contextos formativos, propiciando un entorno favorable para el desarrollo de habilidades y aprendizajes de diverso tipo, minimizando el esfuerzo cognitivo que pudieran conllevar, y sobre todo buscando una mayor implicación de los sujetos a partir de un clima de competitividad y/o cooperación orientado al logro de objetivos educativos determinados, de modo semejante a como lo hacen los videojuegos (Del Moral, 2014).

Así pues, el fenómeno de la *gamificación* no deja indiferente a las prácticas formativas universitarias de distintas titulaciones, hay experiencias exitosas de aprendizaje relacionadas con el *marketing*, recursos humanos, gestión de relaciones con clientes, e incluso, dirigidas a la formación de directivos (Cortizo, Carrero, Monsalve, Velasco, Díaz & Pérez-Martín, 2011); en el ámbito bio-sanitario, hay casos de prácticas gamificadas en las aulas y laboratorios con resultados muy positivos (Prieto, Díaz, Monserrat & Reyes, 2014), etc., en todas ellas se están adoptando estrategias que pasan por la utilización de los clásicos formatos de entretenimiento digital o videojuegos en tanto catalizadores de los procesos de aprendizaje. La gamificación también alcanza al diseño de materiales didácticos como los libros digitales, cada vez más interactivos y enriquecidos con recursos multimedia que convierten el aprendizaje en una actividad lúdica (Area, González & Mora, 2015).

Las diferentes experiencias innovadoras implementadas en aulas universitarias coinciden en incorporar los ingredientes propios de los escenarios lúdicos, proponiendo a los estudiantes la resolución de problemas, elaboración de proyectos, realización de misiones o actividades de distinta índole siguiendo unos hitos (Fitz-Walter, Tjondronegoro & Wyeth, 2011), es decir, adoptando la mecánica propia de los juegos convencionales, estableciendo unos niveles que deben alcanzarse junto a la asignación de puntuaciones a cada reto superado (O'Donovan, Gain & Marais, 2013). Además, de presentar unas dinámicas de juego específicas que regulan las actuaciones de los estudiantes, que contribuyen a visibilizar los productos finales solicitados así como los modos de alcanzarlos, bien sea de forma individual o constituyéndose en equipos, con ánimo de alentar la competitividad (Villagrasa, Fonseca, Romo & Redondo, 2014), garantizando el incremento de la motivación tanto extrínseca como intrínseca de éstos y propiciando la inmersión en las tareas propuestas (Papastergiou, 2009; Hamari, Koivisto & Sarsa, 2014). Otros utilizan la gamificación como instrumento para el diagnóstico de la incorporación de las TIC al ámbito académico (Karam, Buitrago, Fagua & Romero, 2013), o para fomentar una evaluación centrada en el logro de objetivos e incorporando un *feed-back* dinámico y adaptativo (Del Pino, 2015).

De acuerdo con Gallego, Villagrà, Satorre, Compañ, Molina y Llorens (2014), y desde el convencimiento del potencial educativo de esta novedosa estrategia, a continuación se describe una práctica formativa gamificada implementada en el contexto universitario virtual de una asignatura del Grado de Pedagogía, donde a partir de los resultados obtenidos y tras consultar a los estudiantes participantes en la misma, se puede inferir su eficacia vinculada a su consideración sobre las competencias adquiridas tras su realización.

II. El sistema de gamificación en la experiencia llevada

a. El juego de simulación utilizado como potenciador de la motivación

La propuesta llevada a cabo en una asignatura optativa del Grado de Pedagogía, impartida de forma semipresencial, se apoya en un juego de simulación donde los universitarios tienen que diseñar y planificar un proyecto de intervención educativo orientado al desarrollo rural, trabajando conceptos básicos de economía, desarrollo sostenible, respeto por el entorno, promoción del medio rural, organización y gestión de recursos humanos y materiales, etc. Concretamente, para su presentación se adoptó como estrategia la simulación en tanto fórmula de aprendizaje eficaz y motivadora. Virtualmente se sitúa a los estudiantes en un escenario que emula un contexto rural real, recreando sus complejas problemáticas, las cuales exigen tomas de decisiones eficaces para su resolución. Con la simulación se busca favorecer el *engagement* –enganche, traducción literal del inglés- o “compromiso” de los discentes con su proceso de aprendizaje y, en concreto, con la ejecución de la tarea propuesta, de modo similar como sucede con los videojuegos, participando en primera persona y asignándoles la responsabilidad de acometer un proyecto que contribuya al desarrollo del contexto presentado (Muntean, 2011), pues de ellos dependerá su éxito o fracaso. Así pues, se trata de una práctica innovadora gamificada, que toma como punto de partida la simulación y está ligada a la consecución de los objetivos de la asignatura, orientada a cualificarles para su futuro desempeño profesional que potencia la adquisición de competencias específicas de la titulación.

Para desarrollar el proyecto de intervención educativo solicitado se intenta convertir la práctica en una experiencia lúdica para los estudiantes, para lo cual se incorporan los elementos propios que definen un contexto de juego, es decir, se adoptan las claves de un sistema gamificado. Para ello, en un entorno digital e interactivo se presentan los elementos básicos del proyecto a modo de juego, tales como la misión a desarrollar, las reglas a seguir, los puntos a obtener, los desafíos a superar, etc. los cuales se presentan con mayor detalle a continuación.

b. Mecánicas de juego utilizadas en la experiencia llevada a cabo

Para incrementar tanto la motivación de los estudiantes como su implicación (*engagement*) en el proyecto se adoptan estrategias propias de las mecánicas de juego, capaces de crear experiencias lúdico-didácticas que puedan optimizar los resultados de aprendizaje, tales como:

- *Descripción de la misión, reto o desafío*: al inicio del juego se sumerge a los estudiantes en un entorno similar al videojuego "Los Sims", invitándoles a afrontar el reto de diseñar un proyecto de intervención orientado al desarrollo y la promoción socio-cultural y educativa de un ámbito rural desfavorecido. Para ello, se presenta un clip animado donde se utilizan diversos elementos multimedia para proponer la *misión* mediante la cual se pretende que adquieran ciertas habilidades y capacidades inherentes al objetivo final del proyecto. De este modo, se efectúa un recorrido virtual por un pueblo ficticio en el que se van intercalando diferentes mensajes de texto animados para presentar el reto a los discentes, con el fin de despertar su motivación e implicación: "crea tu propia iniciativa empresarial", "tú determinarás su éxito o fracaso", etc. E impulsar su iniciativa hacia el diseño del proyecto.



Imagen 1. Secuencia del clip de película utilizada en la presentación del proyecto y su *misión*

- *Identificación de reglas y niveles*: en el juego se presentan las reglas a seguir y se establecen los niveles que deben superar para concluir la misión con éxito. Para conocerlos, hay que introducirse virtualmente en la escuela del pueblo, -mediante la metáfora gráfica del plano de una casa-, donde quedan visibles tres puertas, a través de las cuales se obtienen datos de interés. La primera puerta da acceso a un aula en cuya pizarra se encuentran detallados los requisitos para llevar a buen término su proyecto educativo-empresarial que deben diseñar. La segunda presenta pistas, enlaces a información relevante, y la tercera muestra la asignación de puntos que cada nivel implica, mediante una rúbrica de evaluación.

Así pues, tras acceder a cada una de las tres aulas e interactuar con los personajes que en ellas se encuentran, los estudiantes obtienen la información necesaria para poder desarrollar la misión. También se muestran "unas huellas" que metafóricamente marcan el itinerario e invitan a descubrir los pasos a dar en el diseño del proyecto, así como a promover un "juego de rol" en donde cada jugador/estudiante puede elegir su propio papel a desempeñar en el transcurso del mismo, al pulsar sobre el icono de cualquiera de los personajes que están sentados alrededor de una mesa de trabajo.



Imagen 2. Diferentes entornos dentro juego donde los estudiantes obtienen diferente información para desarrollar su proyecto

- *Asignación de puntos:* A cada uno de los niveles o etapas establecidas dentro del juego se le ha otorgado un valor diferenciado, que en función de su grado de desarrollo y de los objetivos conseguidos, el estudiante -convertido en jugador- obtiene una calificación u otra, que mediante "un termómetro" permite observar visualmente su estado si va subiendo de nivel, lo que supone una recompensa vinculada a las acciones realizadas a lo largo del juego. Dichos puntajes se presentaban *a priori* mediante una rúbrica de evaluación.

- *Presentación de desafíos:* Para favorecer la motivación de los estudiantes se generaron diversas comunidades o equipos de jugadores que competían entre sí para obtener la puntuación más alta. Con ello, se pretendía, no sólo lograr su implicación, sino también fomentar la cooperación y colaboración entre los integrantes de un mismo equipo para alcanzar un objetivo común.

De igual modo, se introdujo un desafío más, determinado por la herramienta de comunicación a utilizar para favorecer la colaboración intra-equipo en el desarrollo del proyecto. Así, se generaron tres grandes equipos que utilizaron en cada caso, *blogs*, *wikis* o redes sociales para comunicarse e intercambiar información, lo que para muchos supuso un gran desafío, bien por no estar familiarizados con la herramienta o por emplearla para un uso diferente.

- *Visibilización de la reputación de los grupos*: Al terminar el juego y tras valorar los objetivos y competencias alcanzadas con el mismo, se estableció una clasificación con las puntuaciones obtenidas por cada grupo o comunidad de aprendizaje generada en el transcurso del juego. Lo que contribuyó no sólo, a que cada estudiante fuera consciente de sus logros de aprendizaje personales sino que también le permitiera efectuar una comparación con el resto de jugadores, mostrando los puntos fuertes de cada uno.

c. Dinámicas de juego empleadas en la experiencia desarrollada

Simultáneamente, a la actividad propuesta se le dotó de una serie de dinámicas características de los juegos encaminadas a sumergir a los estudiantes en una experiencia de aprendizaje lúdica y significativa. En concreto, se parte de una simulación como motivación inicial para “engancharlos” a la tarea, subrayando la *necesidad de logro* para superar satisfactoriamente la misión solicitada como se ha explicado anteriormente. Junto con el fomento de la *competición* entre los distintos equipos creados por ellos mismos para abordar el reto que se les había encomendado, y animándoles activamente a que se comunicaran entre sí -cubriendo su necesidad de *expresión*- a través de las mencionadas herramientas, para poder elaborar colaborativamente sus propuestas de intervención educativas. De forma esquemática, en el siguiente gráfico se enuncian los componentes básicos que guiaron el proceso de gamificación de la actividad planificada:



Figura 1. Elementos que han guiado el proceso de gamificación de la experiencia llevada a cabo

d. Herramientas y recursos empleados para la gamificación

Entre los desafíos contemplados en el sistema de gamificación se incluye el requisito de utilizar una herramienta de comunicación determinada para acometer la elaboración colaborativa del proyecto de intervención en cada equipo. En este sentido, al inicio de la asignatura se distribuyó a los estudiantes (N=161), aleatoriamente, en tres grupos que introducían variantes precisamente en relación a las herramientas digitales utilizadas para favorecer la colaboración y comunicación entre los integrantes de los diferentes equipos de trabajo constituidos, inmersos en el escenario lúdico recreado. Concretamente, se formaron 15 equipos de trabajo de 4/5 personas que utilizaban los *blogs* como herramienta para la comunicación e intercambio de información; 14 equipos de trabajo

de 4/5 personas que emplearon las *wikis* y otros 14 equipos de 4/5 personas que hicieron uso de las *redes sociales* con esa misma finalidad. Con ello, se pretendía constatar en qué medida las herramientas digitales empleadas podían condicionar -a juicio de los propios estudiantes- la ejecución del proyecto, y, por ende, el desarrollo y la adquisición de determinadas competencias. Puesto que, sin duda, la elección de estas herramientas va ligada a su propia naturaleza, lo cual va a determinar tanto el tipo de interacciones que se produzcan en cada caso, como el grado de inmediatez de los mensajes que se generen a partir de ellas, así como las posibilidades que cada cual pueda ofrecer para la edición conjunta, dando lugar a diferentes entornos colaborativos.

Por otro lado, la utilización del juego como estrategia para incrementar la motivación de los estudiantes supuso una mayor implicación de éstos, promoviendo su capacidad creativa e innovadora para superar con éxito la misión propuesta. Con él, se ha podido constatar como los discentes han adquirido y desarrollado competencias de diversa índole guiados por su necesidad de logro, su espíritu competitivo y su capacidad de expresión. En un intento de conocer su grado de consciencia a ese respecto, se les preguntó sobre las competencias de carácter genérico que consideran haber adquirido y/o consolidado con el proceso de gamificación de la actividad formativa planificada.

III. Gamificación y adquisición de competencias en el contexto universitario

a. Objetivos

Desde la asignatura optativa del Grado de Pedagogía se apostó por la utilización del juego de simulación como estrategia para favorecer la implicación de los estudiantes en prácticas formativas orientadas al diseño de planes de intervención socio-educativos, atendiendo a las peculiaridades que definen la realidad concreta de un contexto rural desfavorecido (despoblamiento, envejecimiento de la población, etc.) y, con ello, garantizar que los universitarios apliquen sus conocimientos teóricos a la práctica real. Para ello, se presentó la actividad con si se tratara de un juego, que sirvió para situarlos en la misión que debían realizar si querían contribuir al desarrollo local de un pueblo -previamente identificado y seleccionado-, mostrándoles las tareas o pruebas que debían realizar para acometer con éxito su empresa. Concluida la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta, se pretende:

- Constatar el nivel de satisfacción de los estudiantes en relación al diseño del proyecto de intervención presentado a modo de juego, así como su opinión sobre la utilidad percibida y la dificultad apreciada para su desarrollo.
- Conocer la consideración de los discentes en cuanto a las competencias de carácter genérico que han percibido desarrollar y/o consolidar en el transcurso del juego de simulación.
- Efectuar un análisis comparativo sobre la contribución de las diferentes herramientas digitales (*blogs*, *wikis* o *redes sociales*) utilizadas por cada grupo de trabajo para favorecer su comunicación e interacción en el desarrollo de su proyecto, en relación a las competencias que manifestaron haber activado en mayor medida en cada caso.

- Analizar en qué medida la utilización de una determinada herramienta digital (*blogs*, *wikis* o *redes sociales*) ha podido influir en su nivel de satisfacción con el juego propuesto, así como en su percepción sobre el grado de dificultad y utilidad del mismo.

Con todo ello, se ha pretendido obtener una información valiosa para determinar la eficacia formativa de la actividad desarrollada así como de los recursos utilizados.

b. Muestra

La muestra estuvo constituida por 161 estudiantes. De los cuales el 82% eran mujeres frente a un 18% de hombres. Un análisis más detallado, en cuanto a la edad de los discentes, nos revela que la mayor parte (84%) se concreta en un intervalo de 20 y 25 años, lo que nos indica la predominancia de una población de estudio joven. No obstante, la muestra abarca edades comprendidas entre los 20 y 40 años.

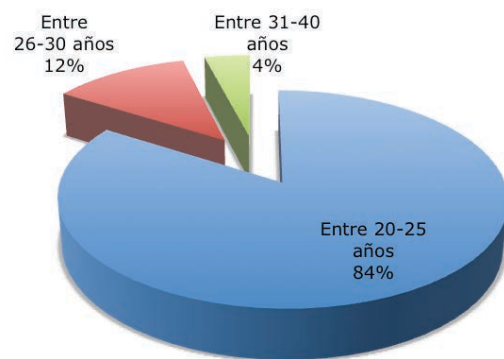


Gráfico 1. Distribución porcentual de los estudiantes que forman la muestra de estudio en función de la edad

Por otro lado, preguntados acerca de la experiencia previa que éstos tenían para realizar proyectos colaborativos con el apoyo de herramientas digitales (*blogs*, *wikis* o *redes sociales*), un 85% de los estudiantes reveló que no contaban con experiencia previa, frente a un 15% que si manifestó tenerla.

c. Instrumento

Para recabar información relativa a la percepción de los estudiantes universitarios sobre las competencias que consideraron haber desarrollado en mayor o menor medida al participar en la experiencia descrita, su opinión sobre la utilidad de la misma, etc., se elaboró un cuestionario *ad-hoc* con el que se les solicitaba diferentes datos a través de once ítems, que se sintetizan a continuación:

- Datos de identificación, referidos a la edad (ítem 1), sexo (Ítem 2) y experiencia previa en el desarrollo de actividades colaborativas apoyadas en el uso de herramientas digitales (ítem 3), donde cada herramienta: uso de *blog*, *wiki* o *redes sociales* son variables dicotómicas.

- Nivel de satisfacción con la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta, medido a través de una escala tipo Likert con tres opciones de respuesta (alta, media y baja) (ítem 4). Del mismo modo, su opinión sobre la utilidad (alta, media y baja) del proyecto a desarrollar para tu futuro desarrollo profesional (ítem 5). Su grado de satisfacción (alto, medio y bajo) con el proceso de gamificación adoptado (ítem 6).
- Promedio de horas (nº) semanales dedicadas a la realización del mencionado proyecto lúdico formativo (ítem 7)
- Nivel de dificultad (alto, medio y bajo) percibido en relación a la realización del proyecto lúdico-formativo (ítem 8).
- Percepción sobre el nivel de adquisición de las competencias genéricas, –definidas en el marco del Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior–, que los estudiantes consideran haber adquirido y/o consolidado con el desarrollo del proyecto, presentadas como variables dicotómicas (Si/No), y categorizadas en instrumentales (ítem 9), interpersonales (ítem 10) y sistémicas (ítem 11).

d. Metodología

Paralelamente al desarrollo de la actividad lúdico-didáctica, se recabó información, entre otros aspectos, sobre la percepción manifestada por los discentes en cuanto a las competencias de carácter genérico que consideraron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con el proyecto propuesto. Para ello, los estudiantes accedían voluntariamente -poco antes de concluir la asignatura- al cuestionario *on line* habilitado al efecto para responder a las preguntas planteadas.

El tratamiento de la información obtenida se llevó a cabo atendiendo al tamaño de la muestra y la naturaleza de las variables contempladas, concretamente aplicando los estadísticos *Chi-cuadrado* (empleando un nivel de significatividad del 95%), *Kruskal-Wallis* y *Mann-Whitney*, con el fin de contrastar si las frecuencias observadas en cada una de las clases de una variable categórica varían de forma significativa respecto a las frecuencias que se esperaría encontrar si la muestra hubiese sido extraída de una población con una determinada distribución de frecuencias.

IV. Resultados

La actividad lúdica se mostraba a partir de una presentación multimedia interactiva, que recreaba un escenario similar al del videojuego *Los Sims*. Aprovechando su componente lúdico, se logró despertar el interés de los estudiantes y potenciar su motivación para que realizaran un proyecto de intervención orientado al desarrollo y a la promoción socio-cultural y educativa de un ámbito rural desfavorecido, el cual debían determinar ellos.

Tras concluir el juego propuesto, se recabó información sobre el nivel de satisfacción de los estudiantes en cuanto a la actividad lúdico-formativa realizada. Así, el 76% de los discentes registró un nivel alto de satisfacción a ese respecto. De igual modo, el 68% manifestó su alta satisfacción con la utilidad percibida en cuanto a la actividad propuesta para su futuro desarrollo profesional. En cuanto al proceso de gamificación de la práctica propuesta, algo más del 70% de

los discentes declaró su alto nivel de satisfacción subrayando que lo consideraban un elemento motivador que ha favorecido en gran medida su implicación en el proyecto.

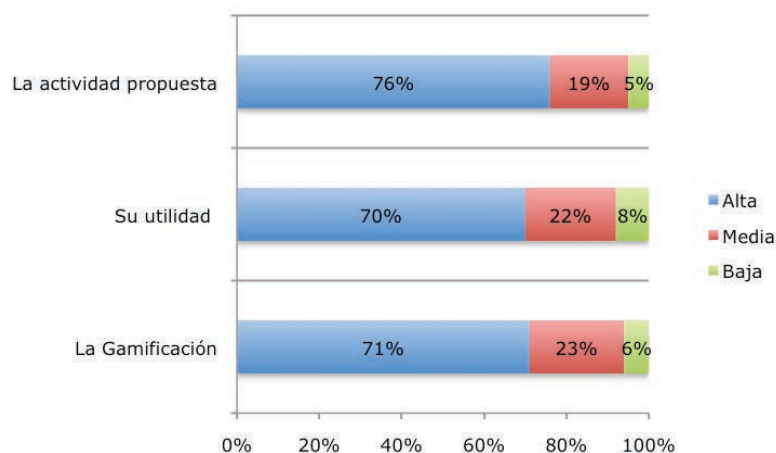


Gráfico 2. Niveles de satisfacción de los estudiantes con la actividad propuesta, su utilidad y con el proceso de gamificación planificado

Asimismo, se solicitó a los discentes que determinasen el número de horas semanales que les supuso la realización del proyecto lúdico-formativo. De este modo, el 36% de los estudiantes encuestados declaró haber dedicado un promedio de entre 3 y 4 horas semanales. Este porcentaje se mantiene, con pequeñas variaciones, en relación a las herramientas digitales utilizadas por cada grupo (*blog, wiki* o redes sociales).

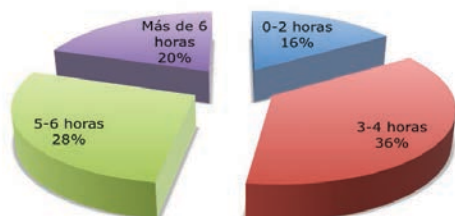


Gráfico 3. Número de horas semanales dedicadas por los estudiantes a la realización de la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta

Preguntados sobre el nivel de dificultad que les supuso el desarrollo de la actividad propuesta en forma de juego, el 64% de los estudiantes encuestados pone el acento en el alto nivel de dificultad que ha entrañado su realización. Debido, en parte, y según las declaraciones efectuadas por los discentes a través de las tutorías llevadas a cabo, a la exigencia y autodisciplina que implica el desarrollo de una actividad de carácter colaborativo, la cual implica el compromiso y el entendimiento con cada uno de los integrantes del grupo de trabajo, lo que no siempre se consigue. Datos que, en gran medida, revelan su poca experiencia en la realización de proyectos colaborativos.

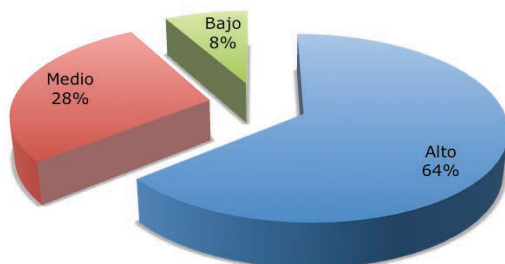


Gráfico 4. Nivel de dificultad de la actividad lúdico-formativa propuesta percibido por los estudiantes

Mediante las pruebas de *Kruskal-Wallis* y *Mann-Whitney* se detectó la existencia de diferencias significativas ($P = .018$) entre los niveles de dificultad encontrada por los estudiantes al realizar la actividad en función de la herramienta digital utilizada para trabajar colaborativamente (*blogs*, *wikis* o redes sociales). Concretamente, tras el análisis de datos mediante el estadístico *Mann-Whitney* se constató que aquellos que habían utilizado las *wikis* ($P = .008$) y las redes sociales ($P = .000$) manifestaron haber encontrado mayor dificultad para llevarla a cabo, a diferencia de aquellos que habían empleado los *blogs*.

Nivel de dificultad	
7,994 2 ,018	Chi-cuadrado gl Sig.asintót.

Tabla 1. Contraste estadístico mediante la prueba *Kruskal-Wallis* entre el nivel de dificultad manifestado por los estudiantes en relación al proyecto lúdico y la herramienta digital utilizada

La dificultad añadida percibida por los estudiantes para realizar el trabajo grupal, derivada del uso de wikis o redes sociales, lo vinculan con el aumento del número de horas semanales invertidas para su elaboración, hecho que se contrastó con el estadístico *Mann-Whitney* ($P = .000$). De igual modo, la falta de experiencia previa en el desarrollo de proyectos colaborativos con apoyo de herramientas digitales fue otra de las variables que ha condicionado el aumento del número de horas semanales dedicadas a la realización del proyecto lúdico-formativo ($P = .026$) y, es que para su desarrollo, tal como se ha apuntado, era necesario crear grupos de trabajos y manejar diferentes herramientas para facilitar la interacción e intercambio de información, lo que supuso más tiempo de dedicación a aquellos estudiantes no habituados a este tipo de tareas.

Horas de dedicación semanal	
1195,500 1495,500 -2,223 ,026	U de Mann-Whitney W de Wilcoxon Z Sig.asintót. (bilateral)

Tabla 2. Contraste estadístico mediante la prueba *Mann-Whitney* entre el número de horas semanales dedicado al proyecto lúdico en relación a la existencia o no de experiencia previa en el desarrollo de proyectos colaborativos con el uso de las herramientas digitales

Por otro lado, se recabó información sobre el tipo de competencias genéricas (instrumentales, interpersonales y sistémicas) que manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado los estudiantes universitarios pertenecientes a cada uno de los tres grupos creados que utilizaban diferentes herramientas digitales para la realización de la mencionada actividad lúdica.

Muestra total	Redes sociales	Wikis	Blogs	Competencias Instrumentales
61%	50%	58%	70%	Capacidad de análisis
80%	71%	81%	85%	Conocimientos básicos de la materia
50%	48%	45%	56%	Habilidades de gestión de la información
48%	67%	43%	39%	Comunicación escrita
64%	76%	74%	48%	Organización y planificación
53%	55%	47%	58%	Manejo de herramientas informáticas

Tabla 3. Competencias de carácter instrumental que los discentes manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con la actividad lúdico-didáctica

El 80% de los estudiantes declaró que con la ejecución del juego adquirieron *conocimientos básicos de la materia*, como era de esperar, ya que estaba íntimamente relacionado con los contenidos de la misma, no en vano los materiales didácticos fueron elaborados específicamente para la asignatura y se proponían a modo de guía de consulta, junto a otros recursos didácticos complementarios, tales como artículos de revistas, aportaciones de congresos y jornadas, legislación o enlaces *web*, para facilitar su realización.

Respecto a otras competencias que los discentes manifestaron haber potenciado con el juego, destacan aquellas relacionadas especialmente con la fase de *organización y planificación* (64%) y *gestión de la información* (50%), todas ellas inherentes a la ejecución de un proyecto, en este caso de carácter colaborativo. Al igual que la *capacidad de análisis* (61%), necesaria para discriminar y

valorar la información recabada a lo largo del juego, en el que se formaron grupos o comunidades de trabajo.

Entre las competencias instrumentales activadas con el juego, según los estudiantes, se encuentran la *comunicación escrita* (48%) y las habilidades ligadas al *uso de herramientas informáticas* (53%), ambas necesarias para facilitar la comunicación intra-grupos, bien a través de *blogs*, *wikis* o redes sociales como fórmulas de colaboración habilitadas en cada caso, dentro de la plataforma institucional empleada.

En relación a las competencias interpersonales que los discentes manifiestan haber desarrollado con el juego, un alto porcentaje (69%) establece que han puesto en práctica habilidades para el *trabajo en equipo*, puesto que, como ya se ha reiterado, se realizó de manera colaborativa mediante la creación de comunidades virtuales de aprendizaje, tanto a través de *blogs*, *wikis* como de redes sociales.

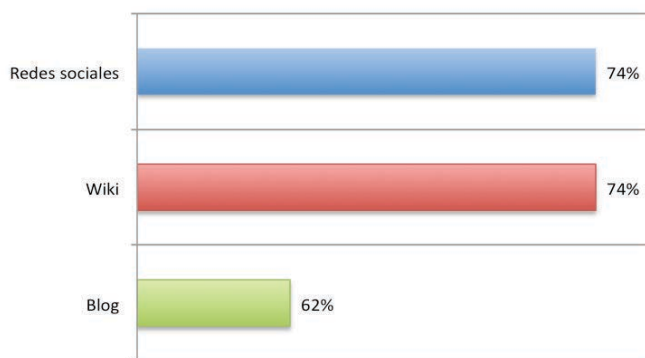


Gráfico 5. Competencias de carácter interpersonal que los discentes manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con la actividad lúdico-didáctica

De modo similar, entre las competencias sistémicas que los estudiantes declaran haber potenciado en mayor medida, se encuentran las habilidades para *diseñar y gestionar proyectos*, y su capacidad para aportar *ideas innovadoras y creativas*, con porcentajes idénticos (60%). Lógicamente, ambas son necesarias para crear una iniciativa novedosa que ofrezca garantía de éxito, que impulse el desarrollo de la población rural desfavorecida previamente determinada por ellos. En este sentido, un 46% de los mismos establece que con el proyecto -meta del juego- han incrementado su *espíritu emprendedor*.

Muestra total	Redes sociales	Wikis	Blog	Competencias Sistémicas
60%	62%	66%	55%	Aportación de ideas innovadoras y creativas
28%	26%	26%	30%	Desarrollo de habilidades para el liderazgo
60%	57%	60%	61%	Diseño y gestión de proyectos
46%	45%	53%	41%	Iniciativa y espíritu emprendedor

Tabla 4. Competencias de carácter sistémico que los discentes manifestaron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado con la actividad lúdico-didáctica

Por último, preguntados por si esta actividad lúdica ha contribuido a incrementar sus habilidades para el *liderazgo*, sólo un 28% de ellos así lo cree, datos explicables puesto que generalmente los grupos o comunidades virtuales eran liderados por una o dos personas, que eran las encargadas de dinamizar internamente los equipos, el resto no asumía ese papel.

Como se puede apreciar a partir de los datos presentados, apenas existen diferencias en cuanto a las competencias de carácter genérico que los discentes manifestaron haber adquirido y/o consolidado tras la realización del proyecto lúdico propuesto atendiendo a las diversas herramientas utilizadas (*blogs, wikis o redes sociales*) para favorecer su comunicación interna.

Sin embargo, un análisis estadístico minucioso, efectuado a través de la prueba *Chi cuadrado*, pudo determinar la existencia de diferencias estadísticamente significativas en función del grupo analizado, es decir, diferencias entre aquellos que utilizaron el *blog*, la *wiki* o las redes sociales para desarrollar el proyecto. Observando que aquellos que emplearon las *wikis* y las redes sociales manifiestan haber potenciado más su *comunicación escrita* ($p = .016$), y sus *habilidades para recoger, organizar y gestionar la información* ($p = .000$; $p = .003$). Probablemente debido a las posibilidades que ofrecen estas herramientas digitales para favorecer la interacción con el resto del equipo y la gestión de la información multiformato.

	Comunicación escrita			Habilidad recoger información			Habilidad organización y gestión de la información		
	Valor	gl	Sig. asintótica (bilateral)	Valor	gl	Sig. asintótica (bilateral)	Valor	gl	Sig. asintótica (bilateral)
Chi-cuadrado de Pearson	8,272	2	,016	21,587	2	,000	11,714	2	,003
Razón de verosimilitudes	8,372	2	,015	22,263	2	,000	11,707	2	,003
Asociación lineal por lineal	6,929	1	,008	20,133	1	,000	9,735	1	,002
N de casos válidos	161			161			161		

Tabla 5. Contraste estadístico mediante la prueba de *Chi cuadrado* entre las competencias: comunicación escrita, habilidades para recoger información y organización y gestión de la información en relación a la herramienta digital empleada para el desarrollo del proyecto lúdico-formativo

Del mismo modo, se pudo apreciar que aquellos que no contaban con experiencia previa en realización de proyectos colaborativos con apoyo de herramientas digitales, consideraron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado en mayor medida la competencia genérica relacionada con el *uso de herramientas informáticas* ($p = .010$). Este dato revela que la ayuda y refuerzos dispensados a través de la acción tutorial, encaminados a favorecer y potenciar el uso de recursos digitales para la elaboración del proyecto colaborativo en modo juego, dieron su fruto, ya que los que tenían menos experiencia previa en este tipo de tareas eran los más reticentes a la hora de implicarse activamente.

V. Conclusión

La innovación de la experiencia formativa gamificada planteada radica en su atractiva fórmula de presentación, a través de una simulación, donde se presenta la tarea a realizar como un reto a superar y donde cada miembro del grupo de trabajo, a modo de juego de rol, debe adoptar unos papeles claramente diferenciados aunque complementarios e imprescindibles para su exitosa ejecución. Su estética recuerda a la de un videojuego de simulación social que, mediante las animaciones y los diferentes elementos multimedia que incluye, pretende despertar el interés y la motivación de los discentes para la ejecución del proyecto.

Tras concluirse el proyecto, se pudo constatar el logro de los objetivos delimitados inicialmente. Así, algo más del 70% de los discentes -que formaron parte de la muestra de estudio- manifestó un nivel alto de satisfacción tanto con el tipo de actividad propuesta, como con su utilidad percibida, así como con la gamificación del proceso en tanto recurso motivador. A pesar de todo, hay que subrayar que para el 64% de los mismos la realización de la tarea entrañó un alto nivel de dificultad. En concreto, el análisis estadístico llevado a cabo permitió relacionar significativamente el incremento de la dificultad de la tarea percibido por los discentes con la utilización de las *wikis* o redes sociales para su desarrollo, dado que según manifestaron no estaban familiarizados con el uso de estas herramientas digitales con esta finalidad, lo que supuso una dificultad añadida que afectó al número de horas semanales dedicadas a la ejecución del proyecto. Sin embargo, se puede afirmar que la gamificación ha resultado una interesante y válida estrategia para potenciar la implicación de los discentes y favorecer el aprendizaje colaborativo, a tenor de las valoraciones positivas vertidas por todos ellos, independientemente de la herramienta digital utilizada por su grupo.

En cuanto a las competencias que los estudiantes consideraron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado al elaborar su proyecto, han resultado significativas las ligadas a la adquisición de conocimientos básicos de la materia, la organización y planificación de tareas, además de haber incrementado su capacidad de análisis. También señalan haber potenciado su capacidad tanto para trabajar en equipo, como para diseñar proyectos, generar ideas innovadoras y creativas.

Además, tras efectuar los análisis pertinentes, se constatan diferencias significativas entre los que habiendo utilizado las *wikis* y las redes sociales consideran haber potenciado en mayor medida las competencias ligadas a su habilidad para la comunicación escrita, la recogida, organización y gestión la información, que aquellos que utilizaron los *blogs*. Igualmente, se ha podido apreciar que los estudiantes que carecían de experiencia previa en la realización de proyectos colaborativos con apoyo de herramientas digitales, percibieron haber desarrollado y/o consolidado en mayor medida la competencia digital relacionada con el manejo de éstas, lógicamente.

Sin duda, el diseño del proyecto centrado en la plasmación de una iniciativa empresarial para impulsar el desarrollo de un contexto rural desfavorecido, -elaborado en el marco del escenario gamificado creado-, ha ofrecido una oportunidad a los estudiantes para:

- Facilitar su aprendizaje, al permitirles aplicar los contenidos teóricos aprendidos en la asignatura.

- Concentrarse en el logro de determinados objetivos propios de la materia, así como en el desarrollo de las competencias específicas al simular la puesta en práctica de su propuesta.
- Reproducir una experiencia exitosa, contextualizándola y adaptándola a las demandas del entorno social y al colectivo al que se dirigen en cada caso.
- Planificar un plan de actuación educativo atendiendo al logro de los objetivos propuestos, ajustándose a los recursos humanos y económicos con los que se cuenta.
- Autoevaluarse de forma realista, tras conocer los criterios que sirven para valorar sus ejecuciones, tanto personales como colectivas.
- Minimizar la brecha entre la teoría académica y la práctica laboral.

Para concluir, hay que subrayar que la conversión de una actividad formativa académica en una experiencia lúdica atrayente y retadora no solo ha potenciado la motivación e implicación de los estudiantes para acometer la "misión" presentada de forma efectiva, sino que ha contribuido al incremento de numerosas competencias. Si bien ha exigido al docente activar su imaginación y creatividad para diseñar escenarios de aprendizaje atractivos, adoptando las mecánicas propias de los juegos para dinamizar el proceso de aprendizaje, combinando novedosas estrategias didácticas y utilizando herramientas digitales para flexibilizar la interacción y la comunicación, así como para promover la competitividad, a partir de la propuesta de atractivas actividades basadas en la resolución de tareas y en la realización de proyectos de forma innovadora y colaborativa, capaces de fomentar el desarrollo de numerosas competencias.

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Using Gamification to Enhance Second Language Learning

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Abstract

One major competence for learners in the 21st century is acquiring a second language (L2). Based on this, L2 instruction has integrated new concepts to motivate learners in their pursue of achieving fluency. A concept that is adaptable to digital natives and digital immigrants that are learning a L2 is Gamification. As a pedagogical strategy, Gamification is basically new, but it has been used successfully in the business world. Gamification not only uses game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts (Werbach & Hunter, 2012), but also empowers and engages the learner with motivational skills towards a learning approach and sustaining a relax atmosphere. This personality factor as Brown (1994) addresses is fundamental in the teaching and learning of L2. This article covers aspects regarding language, second language learning methodology and approaches, an overview of the integration of technology towards L2 instruction, Gamification as a concept, motivational theory, educational implications for integrating the strategy effectively, and current applications used. It also calls for a necessity of empirical evidence and research in regards to the strategy.

Keywords

Gamification, Second Language Learning, Motivational Theory, Student Engagement

I. Introduction

The use of Gamification in educational settings toward L2 learning involves pedagogical approaches, methodologies, and strategies. All of these are part of the transition made by language learning instruction throughout generations. Several motivational strategies and approaches used in traditional pedagogy are also part of this transition. Including Behaviorism, Cognitivist approaches, along with social interaction and sociocultural theories.

As the 21st century moves forward, the field of second language learning and instruction has become more technology oriented. This adjustment in the teaching strategies is in accordance with the learners the educators are receiving in their classroom. Plenty of second language (L2) learners are part of a generation that Prensky (2001) describe as "Digital Natives". These learners process the information different and the educational system does not fit their needs. In addition more learners are aware of the benefits of the Internet and the strength of Connectivism as explained by Siemens (2005), where knowledge resides outside nodes of specialized information. At one point Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was instrumental connecting with the L2 learner, also the integration of Web 2.0 move the L2 learning process away from the typical classroom setting. Both technology oriented strategies fit their purposes and where successful. But none of these two strategies worked directly with the psychological aspect of motivation. Brown (1994) sees motivation as a necessary personality factor that the learner needs in order to acquire a L2. Current L2 educators are well aware of the strategies suited for this time and that enhances motivation and engages learners in acquiring L2. From all the strategies that exist, Gamification is one that constantly promotes motivation. According to Werbach and Hunter (2012), is the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts In addition it deals with the two clusters of Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation, which are necessary in the L2 learning experience. It also adapts to motivational work conducted in the field of L2 by Gardner and Lambert (1972), which mentions Instrumental and Integrative motivation, and Graham (1984) distinction of Assimilative motivation. In addition, research has found Educational Gamification in L2 learning is basically new but its success in other disciplines made it adaptable to the objectives towards the development second language acquisition (SLA) in learners.

II. Understanding Language and Second Language

Before moving forward to the use of Gamification and how it enhances L2 learning its necessary to understand the concept of language. This is sometimes a dilemma. Most of the time thanks in part to the abroad definitions of the concept. According to Brown (1994), the word language has many definitions in dictionaries and introductory textbooks. For that reason a L2 educator needs to see it as a composite definition. This type of definition will help the educator adapt it towards the L2 learner or even instructional mode. Brown (1994) presents it as a list:

1. Language is systematic and generative.
2. Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.
3. Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may also be visual.
4. The symbols have conventionalized meaning to which they refer.
5. Language is used for communication.
6. Language operates in a speech community or culture.

7. Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.
8. Language is acquired by all people in much the same way-language and language learning both has universal characteristics.

The teaching and learning process is necessary to be understood as a base for L2 learning and interaction. Based on Gage (1964), teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. At the same time teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting the conditions for learning. If the educator understands the learner's process of acquiring knowledge, he or she will be able to develop a philosophy, a style, an approach, methods, and classroom techniques. According to Bruner (1966), in Brown (1994), listed that a theory of instruction needs to specify the following:

1. The experiences which most effectively implant in the individual a predisposition toward learning.
2. The ways in which a body of knowledge should be structured so that the learner can most readily grasp it.
3. The most effective sequences in which to present the materials to be learned.
4. The nature and pacing of rewards and punishments in the process of learning and teaching and learning.

According to Kimble and Garmenzy (1963) and seen in Brown (1994), learning is a relatively permanent change in a behavioral tendency and is the result of reinforced practice. Based on this definition a list of learning domains for research and practice are presented:

1. Learning is acquisition or "getting".
2. Learning is retention of information or skill.
3. Retention implies storage systems, memory, and cognitive organization.
4. Learning involves active, conscious focus on and acting upon events outside or inside the organism.
5. Learning is relatively permanent but subject to forgetting.
6. Learning involves some form of practice, perhaps, reinforced practice.
7. Learning is a change in behavior.

a. Differences in first language learning and second language learning

It's impossible to continue without explaining basic concepts and definitions of SLA, differences between first language learning (L1) and L2, and presenting an overview of theories, methods, and instructional techniques used throughout the years. Such like the definition of language, there are many definitions on SLA and learning that tend to confuse. But perhaps what researchers have called the most important conceptualization in the field (Taylor, 1983) and supported by Brown (1994), is the distinction made by Stephen Krashen between language acquisition and language learning in his theory of SLA. According to Krashen (1982), acquisition is a subconscious process while learning is conscious. But instead of a philosophical approach towards the term, a definition by Gass and Selinker (2001) that establishes that SLA is the learning of a non-native language after learning of a native language has begun and occurring in the context in which the language is spoken. SLA and learning differs from Foreign Language Learning (FLL), because the environment is of one's native language.

According to Hart and Risley (1995), differences between L1 and L2 arises because L1 occurs naturally and perhaps without any formal instruction by children being constantly exposed to language rich environments over the course of many years. On the other hand L2 most of the time depends heavily on learning experiences in more constricted environments associated with the classroom or some other formal setting. In these settings, a major goal frequently is to formally teach children the elements of language that are learned much more informally in their native language. Consequently, assumptions regarding teaching and learning second languages are very different from assumptions about children learning their native language. But according to Malone (2012), a strong foundation in your mother tongue constitutes a strong “bridge” toward L2. In addition she expresses that without that characteristic any movement towards L2 could be in jeopardy or in danger of not achieving educational goals.

b. Theories in second language acquisition and learning

There have been several representative theories for SLA throughout the years. This includes: Behaviorism, Language Acquisition Device (LAD), Information Processing, Social Interaction and Sociocultural Theories. An overview of these theories is explained in the table below, which is adapted from Malone (2012):

Behaviorism	Typified by B.F. Skinner and impacted almost all areas of investigation. Human behavior could be learned through stimulus, response, and positive or negative reinforcement or S-R-R.
Language Acquisition Device (LAD)	Theorized by Noam Chomsky and breaks with S-R-R. “Argues that the stages of development that are required for children to develop their cognitive abilities do not apply to language learning. This new approach focused almost entirely in the deep structure of individuals’ native language”.
Information Processing	The Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT) was developed by Anderson (1983). “Intelligence is simply the gathering together and fine tuning of many small units of knowledge that in total produce complex thinking”.
Social Interaction and Sociocultural theories	Theorized by Vygotsky and emphasizes in the role of social environment on children’s learning. Swain (1985), argues that comprehensible output in meaningful conversations is necessary for success in SLA. Gass (2002), focus on the language learning context and how learners use their linguistic environment.”

Table 1. Theories in SLA and Learning

c. Methods for second language instruction

In addition several methods for L2 instruction have been used throughout the years. It all started with the Grammar Translation Method back in the 19th century. According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979), the method for learning included teaching in the mother tongue with little active use of the target language, vocabulary lists, long and elaborate grammar explanations, little attention to content of text, no attention to pronunciation, everything explained using the mother tongue, and plenty of memorization. Then, linguists in America developed the Audiolingual Approach in the early 20th century. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979), explain that this method follow an structural pattern with repetitive drills, plenty of tapes, language labs and visual aids, very little tongue by teachers is permitted, there is a great effort by learner to produce error free utterances, and grammar is taught following inductive analogy rather than deductive explanations. Another method used for SLA and learning is the Natural Approach developed by Krashen (1982) and based on his SLA Monitor Model, which included ideas, developed by Chomsky. Some of the characteristics of the Natural Approach includes a basic form or natural order of L2 learning and instruction, presents a difference between SLA and L2 learning, an affective filter plays a critical role and the approach has a silent period or phase. Moving forward, the appearance of the Communicative Approach integrated learners to real life situations in order to prepare them for the real world. Later, this became more a way of teaching than a method as explained by Brown (1994). It created a theoretical framework design around a set of classroom principles better know as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). These principles are listed by Malone (2012), and include:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
4. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Other approaches later appeared based on the CLT perspective. These included Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content Based Instruction (CBI).

d. Teaching strategies in second language acquisition and learning

In order to be successful in SLA and L2 learning the selection of teaching strategies needs to be accurate. According to Brown (1994), these strategies will create the relaxed atmosphere necessary to comfort the L2 learner. Some of the strategies are briefly mentioned and explained in the table below.

Total Physical Response	Promotes interactivity and is based on the silent period explained by Krashen (1982). Speaking is not necessary because comprehensible input is given. The instructor needs to provide a variety not to bore the students.
Cooperative Learning	This strategy follows the use of groups and pairs in order to achieve positive interaction. Plenty of strategies are presented through the peers.
Dialogue Journals	Promote written conversations between the teacher and learner. Reflexive journals are promoted. Good for assessing writing in a different and relax format.
Scaffolding	The advanced learners help their peers achieve success. It's part of Krashen (1982) comprehension input. Fluency is built thru positive reinforcement. This type of activity is not suited for virtual settings.

Table 2. Second Language Acquisition and Learning Strategies

III. Overview of Emergent Technologies in Second Language Learning

There is a strong bond between Gamification and emergent technologies. It all starts with its definition which can be synthesized as the application of game mechanics in non-game related contexts (Deterding, Sicart, Nacke, and Nixon, 2011). The main objective of Gamification is to increase participation and motivate users through the use of game elements such as points, leaderboards, and immediate feedback among other things. This is similar to the strategy of using technologies in L2 learning. The use of technology in L2 learning and instruction has played an essential part throughout the years. This is in part based in Prensky's (2001), definition of the Digital Natives. In addition, the work of Ybarra and Green (2003), mentions that the use of technology plays an integral part in providing L2 learners a valuable language experience as they learn a second language. Most of all it contributes to the positive development of some personality factors like self-esteem, risk-taking and most of all motivation. Developing motivation in the L2 learner by using technology provides a common denominator between Gamification and L2 learning which results in enhancing this experience. In L2 learning, integrating technology has become essential and the integration of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been instrumental for the development of teaching and learning. This is based on CALL established presence in academia and because it focuses on technology (Hubbard & Levy, 2006). According to Levy (1997), CALL is defined as the application of the computer in language teaching and learning. It is the evolution of Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL). The use of CALL in L2 these days has moved away from the Behavioristic CALL, which was a sub-component of CAI, of the 1950's and 60's. Behavioristic CALL focused on repetitive and extensive language drills and grammatical explanations along with translation tests. It is well remembered in part by Plato, which was the tutorial of the time and ran on special software that needed a central computer and terminals. This was not user friendly and boring for the L2 learner. Then, the evolution continued to Communicative CALL, which followed cognitive theories during the 1970's and 1980's. Cognitive theorists focused on learning as a process of discovery, expression, and development. The type of strategy implemented focused on computer-based activities instead of using forms themselves. By the emergence of the PC other possibilities that

included the use of target language predominantly or exclusively, grammar was taught explicitly rather than implicitly. The use of text reconstruction programs and stimulations provided the L2 learners with the experience of working alone or in pairs. Finally, Integrative CALL appeared during the 1990's based on a socio-cognitive view and a focus on the use of language in authentic social contexts. This opened the door for a more diverse student centered use of technology in L2. An integration during the teaching and learning started working with task based projects, project based approaches, and content based approaches. Integrative CALL implemented an approach toward L2 learners by which listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills were used in combination with the learning of technology tools as an ongoing process for language learning. This type of CALL opened the door for the use of the Web 2.0 and social media as a strategy towards L2 learning. Nowadays, thanks to CALL, the L2 learner has become an active participant and language explorer. Also the students recognize that to do several tasks they need to use various tools that will help them learn L2 easily and effectively (Ybarra & Green, 2003). On the other hand educators had understood that they are not the only source for language information and the need for training in emergent technologies is necessary in order to use multimedia appropriately and accurately.

The use of the Web 2.0 changed the educational world and the L2 teaching and learning was not the exception. According to O'Reilly (2005), the Web 2.0 are web applications that facilitate interactive information for sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. They are the evolution of traditional technologies into web applications focusing on the user. This end user vision helped the teaching and learning process dramatically in L2 basically in part for giving the opportunity to the learning of interacting in social networking and web based communities, along with expressing their opinions in blogs, doing collaborative work with wikis, and developing oral language skills with podcasts. The strategy of using the Web 2.0 in L2 learning provided motivation for students who at a certain period needed to empower their personality and sociocultural aspects in order to acquire fluency.

IV. What is Gamification?

The concept of Gamification is basically new, and according to Werbach and Hunter (2012), is the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts. It is based in the success of the gaming industry, social media, and decades of research in human psychology. Basically, any task, assignment, process or theoretical context can be gamified.

The main objectives focus on increasing the participation of a person, which most of the time is called or mentioned as a "user", and motivate him/her by incorporating game elements and techniques, like leaderboards and immediate feedback. This creates in the users a sense of empowerment and engagement in the way they work through processes and achieve tasks. In addition, understanding the basic concepts of the games becomes essential at the time of delineating and using Gamification as a strategy. But even before thinking about the motivational aspects that this concept provides, it is necessary to re-visit the four components of the definition which are: games, elements, design and non-game contexts.

These components are explained in the work of Sailer, Hense, Mandl, and Klevers (2013) as follows:

“The term game is usually understood to imply the following situational components: a goal, which has to be achieved; limiting rules which determine how to reach the goal; a feedback system which provides information about progress towards the goal; and the fact that participation is voluntary”. The term element helps to distinguish the concept of gamification from serious games, which describe full-fledged games for non-entertainment purposes. Gamification on the other hand refers to the explicit use of particular elements of games in non-gaming contexts.

The term design refers to the use of game design instead of game-based technologies or practices of the wider game ecology. As stated before, the area of application of gamification is very broad. To take account of that and to prevent limiting the definition to certain contexts, the area of application is just described by the term non-game-contexts.”

Those components are essential to be understood individually, and are explained in an abroad form. On the other hand the concept of Gamification takes an additional perspective when the components, perceived as key elements, become instrumental in the development of the concept and application of the concept. For example the concept will involve the concepts of game elements, game design, and non-game context. Also, Gamification is diverse and has different uses.

a. Game elements

The regular design of patterns that design the games are known as game elements. Some of these elements, sometimes described as components, are seen in most of the games nowadays, including: points, badges, leaderboards, progress bars/progression charts, performance graphs, quests, levels, avatars, social elements, and rewards. All these elements have different purposes and can be adapted to basically any work, business or education related environment. A brief definition of each element is provided in the table below:

Points	Numeric accumulation based on certain activities.
Badges	Visual representation of achievements for the use shown online.
Leaderboards	How the players are ranked based on success.
Progress bars/Progression	Shows the status of a player.
Performance graph	Shows player performance.
Quests	Some of the tasks players have to fulfill in a game.
Levels	A section or part of the game
Avatars	Visual representation of a player or alter ego.
Social elements	Relationships with other user through the game.
Rewards/reward system	System to motivate players that accomplish a quest.

Table 3. Game elements and definitions

Each game element used in Gamification enhances automatically the teaching and learning process of L2. Most of the games the public knows have these elements nowadays, but all of them follow a systematic plan. Every game integrates three basic elements: meta-centered activities, rewards, and progression (Dickey, 2005). This follows what is expressed by Smith- Robbins (2011), who mentions that all game activities are meta-centered and have activities of this kind because they are oriented towards a specific objective which ultimately focuses on winning by defeating obstacles and other conditions, in order to achieve or complete a quest. In addition, and depending on the context, each game employs a mechanism for the player to receive rewards or reward system. There are three principal categories, which include: leaders, prizes or awards, and achievements.

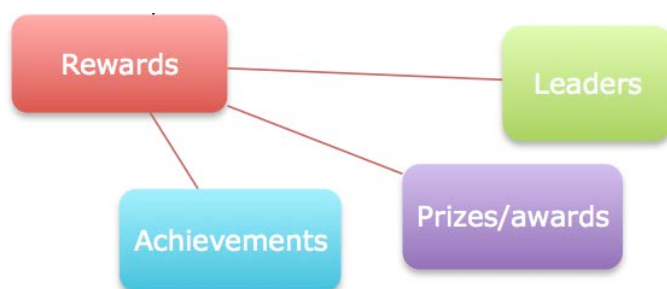


Image 1. Principal categories of game elements

The leaders are the users classified based on their game success. The same concept is used in sports and most of the time incorporates a leaderboard, which could serve as a strong motivator. This category is typically used in competitive activities, but is often employed by the business world to motivate teamwork. Another reward system includes prizes or awards. This type of reward occurs in games where the player is able to unblock additional activities or levels after successfully accomplishing the previous ones. Prizes/awards promote an additional commitment and engagement by the player (Glover, Campbell, Latig, Norris, Toner & Tse, 2012) and that is one aspect which is persisted in L2 learning. Finally, achievements are publicly shown icons, or the so-called badges, in the player's online profile. They are perceived as the integration or combination of the previously mentioned reward categories. The integration and use of badges, each with a different meaning, has grown tremendously in part to the development of game consoles and online gaming. For the L2 learner motivation arrives in the way of acceptance or blending in. If they receive the recognition they will be motivated to move to another level or reach an additional reward. The final basic element implemented in games is progression. According to Dickey (2005), progression is a very important element for games. Most of all for the level of engagement and motivation it gives to the player. Its main objective is to maintain the player informed on how much progress he or she has in the level. In addition it gives the player the necessary information about the goals that were completed and the necessary tasks to complete the level. It also represents the player's journey, which could be part of a series of small challenges embedded into a larger challenge (Werbach and Hunter (2012). In the L2 classroom the educator implements progression by systematically promoting healthy competition and showing the progress to the class. The L2 learner is able then to see his or her progress and becomes a risk taker while he is motivated to move on or continue.

b. Game design and non-game contexts

Another component in the definition of Gamification mentioned by Werbach and Hunter (2012) is game design. Basically, games are not only elements; games are design systemically and artistically for the purpose of fun but they need to be creative and focused. They need to provide originality and not merely be clones of others. Also, originality and character is necessary to provide depth and richness to the player's experience. Good game design is balanced and leaves the player with a feeling on how was the game experience overall. For example: Was it challenging? Was it hard? Was it easy? In addition, game design has an experiential aspect that involves the integration of current and novel approaches based on exploration and discovery that could be applied to Gamification and motivate the player.

Werbach and Hunter (2012) mentioned that Gamification is developed following a non-game context vision. What this means is that the target objectives won't be focused solely in having fun or enjoyment, both will be part of the experience. The vision of non-game contexts has been essential in the development and training of employees by many companies around the world. Pappas (2013) mentions that the use of game like strategies make training for the work environment more interesting, gratifying, and applicable than other techniques.

c. Current uses of Gamification

As the article indicates, the concept of Gamification is not new. Plenty of uses have been given before that fit the criteria. But, nowadays with the proliferous use of social media and the accessibility to the Internet, the concept is being applied to plenty of diverse uses. Some uses include: employee motivation, conceptualization of the concept of energy preservation, to beat and understand diseases, create healthy competition, to promote charitable donations, promote customer loyalty, education, language learning, among others. There are several Gamification projects that are currently been used and that move away from the typical check-ins to earn points or badges encouraged by the Foursquare app. The following are three examples that present the concept of Gamification with diverse purposes. In addition, Gamification is currently implemented with educational purposes as a strategy to foster student engagement in different content areas including L2 learning.

U.S. Army-America's Army

For many years the U.S. Army has been using games for training purposes. But, nowadays they are using Gamification, by integrating a gamifying experience called America's Army, with the final mission of recruiting people for their branch of the United States armed forces.

Samsung Nation

Everyone identifies Samsung, the South Korean company with state of the art phones, tv's, tablets among other things. But there is a strong market demand and competition in this industry. They created a gamified social loyalty and customer engagement program called Samsung Nation where they use elements such like badges, and progress through levels of achievement. Samsung created this social project in order to establish a branded content for the company. Thru Samsung Nation

users get engage within the community in reviewing products, watching videos, and other activities.

Chore Wars

One of the aspects of Gamification it that in order to promote motivation it promotes competition. But is not a competition that will finish in discord, is healthy competition to engage people in achieving an objective. This type of competition is presented thru ChoreWars, which is often used for employee motivation.

V. Gamification in Education and Second Language Learning

The use of technology in education has become necessary to fortify the teaching and learning experience in the 21st century. Throughout the years we've seen dramatic changes and experienced transitions that had move forward computer hardware and software, along with web-based technologies towards instruction. Most of all, we've experienced dramatic changes in the educational interests and the ways to teach different generations. Nowadays, most of the students are digital natives, and they learn and process information different (Prensky, 2001). The also called millennial generation shares information and is used to blogging, gaming and social networking. Instead of emails they prefer to text and have created a language based on acronyms. They are focused toward everything that is web based and are not afraid of expressing or assuming an individual or shared vision. Based on this type of learner plenty of instructors from different subjects, including L2 teachers, are implementing several teaching strategies that use plenty of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's), Distributed Learning, Mobile Learning resources and Gamed Based Learning. In addition, these educators are aware of new trends in educational technology and are integrating Gamification to their teaching. According to the NMC-Horizon Report (2014), Gamification is building support in teachers and the time of adoption is around two to three years. The report established clearly that:

“the Gamification of education is gaining support among educators who recognize that effectively designed games can stimulate large gains in productivity and creativity among learners”.

In addition, Gamification has become a tendency in online learning and in professional development for educators. The report presents the example of Kaplan University, who embedded Gamification software to their LMS and web applications; they ran a pilot program in one of their information technology courses with plenty of success as the NMC-Horizon Report (2014), mentions the following:

“Students' grades improved 9% and the number of students who failed the course decreased by 16%.”

In regards to professional development for educators the report presents the case of the Deloitte executive firm. They developed the Deloitte Leadership Academy and implemented educational Gamification. Some of the game elements they instituted were the use of badges for those who completed the curriculum-based missions. As part of the reward mechanism, learners were able to share their badges in their LinkedIn profile for worldwide view through the Internet.

Gamification has been the subject of research, discussion, and application in L2 learning and SLA a few years now. The objective for integrating Gamification towards education is to unchain a more attractive and effective learning experience for the student. Following this aspect the L2 learner feels attracted towards having this experience. This is based on the idea the L2 education has been immersed in technology innovation for many years. In order to change or set off a specific behavior, the learners need to be motivated and Gamification opens the door for the L2 learner to enhance its language learning experience and at the same time acquire the skill to solve any task or challenge the class, the unit, or the topic presents. In addition, Gamification offers the learners an opportunity to interact among them as it's implied in a social game. Following this criteria Gamification and several of the most common approaches and techniques in L2 teaching and are being integrated. Another detail is that when people perceive any form of social presence they tend to respond in a natural way to feelings such as happiness, empathy, and frustration, or even follow social rules like taking turns (Fogg, 2002).

A very important aspect in Gamification with educational purposes is based on the implication that envisions educational objectives. These educational objectives will be seen by the learner as challenges to be accomplished in order to move from one stage to the other. At the end the challenge and moving from one stage to the other becomes part of the learning outcome. This provides alternatives for L2 educators in order to plan effectively toward the language learning experience and fluency levels they are working with and rethink their practices based on the similarities they find in games and learning. For example by implementing Gamification the L2 learner could think of him or her as a player looking forward to complete a level. If this is translated to the psycho-pedagogical aspect, and following Ames (1990) and Pintrich (2003) the learner will be moving forward after successfully completing a unit, module, or task and the language learning is assessed thru a variety of game like experiences. Moving Educational Gamification into the L2 learning process let's the instructor plan instruction using a gamified shared vision, along with an increase in the time dedicated to the learning tasks and in the level of difficulty, in this case fluency towards the language approach. By following this learners become more engaged and motivated. In addition, motivation increases in a gamified instructional environment when the learner performance is publicly recognized thru a reward system of prizes/awards. In the case of Gamification in L2 and when badges are implemented, Buckingham (2014), acknowledges that it's use serves as a motivational tool and could become a form of formative assessment along with developing a higher classroom setting standards for the challenges that the learner presents while in the quest of achieving fluency in L2. An analog example of a reward system was when the teacher publicly recognizing a student by giving him/her a golden star. According to Glover, Campbell, Latig, Norris, Toner and Tse (2012), the use of badges or another reward-gamified system should motivate the students in more competitive tasks, for example creating a research paper, and should never substitute to be exempt of a test. If this occurs the real learning process could be affected (Meece, Anderman, Anderman 2006).

a. Educational gamification five step model

In order to apply Gamification, regardless of the course, to the teaching and learning process a series of steps needs to be followed. These will guide the instructor to plan accordingly the Gamification aspect. In order to gamify instruction, the educators follow a five-step model. This model is presented in an image below from the work of Huang and Soman (2013).



Image 2. Educational Gamification Five Step Model (Adapted from Huan and Soman (2013)

In order to deal with step one, Understanding the Target Audience and the Context, the instructor needs to know who his or her students are. A combination of the target audience is necessary along with analysing the context to understand several key factors like group size, environment, skills sequence, and length. Is in this step that the “pain points” appear. Those pain points are several factors that prevent the learner advancement of the program. There are some common pain points in education: focus, motivation, skills, pride, learning environment and nature of the course, and physical, mental and emotional factors. By understanding these points the educator will be ready to determine the Gamification elements to implement.

Defining the Learning Objectives, step two, is always necessary for a successful teaching and learning experience. These objectives need to have general instructional goals, specific learning goals, and behavioral goals. In order to have a successful learning experience thru Gamification the instructor needs to have the ability of combining and implementing the learning objectives.

Step three on the five-step model, Structuring the Experience, looks to break down the program and identify the main points. In these stage the instructor prepares the sequence and quantify what the student needs to learn and achieve by the end of each stage. If students are staying behind, the instructor needs to re-think and provide a push for motivation in order for the student to complete the stage. The educator needs to move his educational program from simple to complex by starting with easier milestones so that the student stays engaged and motivated.

As seen in the image above, Identifying Resources is step four of this model. At the moment the stages have been identified, the teacher will have complete assurance of which stage can or can't be gamified. The instructor needs to reflect in regards to several aspects that need to be considered. These are: tracking mechanisms, currency, levels, rules, and feedback. The image below presents these aspects along with definitions.

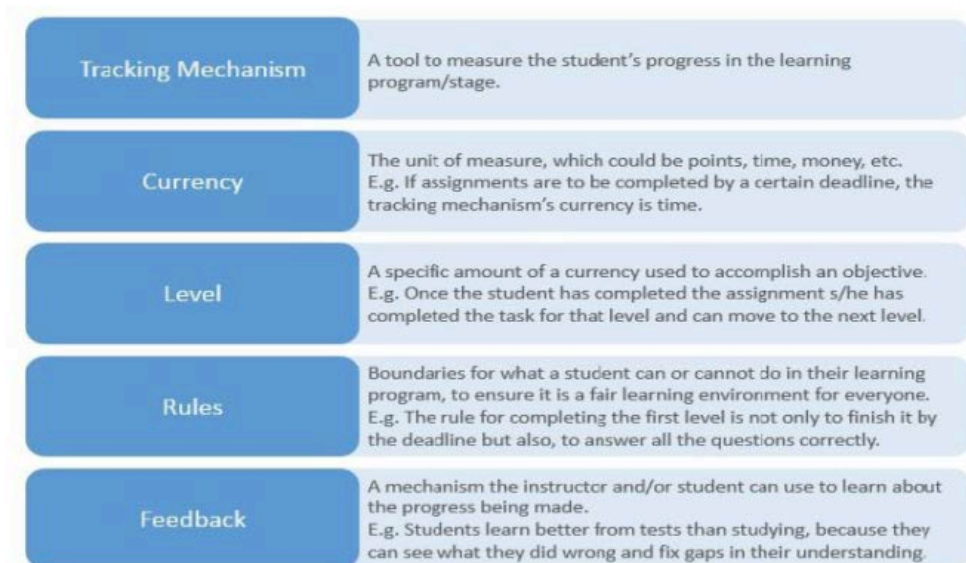


Image 3. Step 4 definitions





The last step of Huang and Soman (2013) model is Applying Gamification Elements. In this step the educator decides which Gamification elements should be applied. The elements are divided in self and social. Self-elements most of the time uses badges, levels and time restrictions. They focus on making students compete with themselves and recognize self- achievement. Meanwhile, interactive competitions along with cooperation are seen as social- elements. Is with this type of element that students' achievements are made public and the students become part of a community.

By following the previous steps, educators will have the opportunity for strategic planning in what could become a heaven of educational creativity towards the teaching and learning process. There are plenty of activities that educators could implement thru Educational Gamification. These activities could be transferred toward L2 instruction. Some might include the use of online educational games, best guess, rewards system, badges, use of Nintendo WII or Xbox and the Internet for plenty of educational digital game based activities, and combining social platforms and social education platforms where badges and progression could be located and seen. All of the previous are focus on engaging the learner in healthy competition. Nowadays, one key essential need for the learners is to be motivated and that is the core that moves Gamification. Through the use of game elements like avatars, badges, leaderboards, progress charts, among other, learners will receive an extra input, similar to the one they have in console games that will motivate them to achieve another educational task or even learn a second language.

b. Differences between Gamification, game-based learning, simulations and serious games

At this stage is necessary to present the differences between the concepts of Gamification, Game Based Learning, Simulations, and Serious Games. As is has been previously establish the concept of Gamification is the use of game elements and game design techniques in non- game contexts

(Werbach & Hunter, 2012). This is used as part of stimuli in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand Caponeto, Earp and Ott (2014), presents Game Based Learning as the adoption of games for educational purposes. Meanwhile, Kapp (2012) comments that Simulation is a self-contained type of environment where interaction is essential for the learner to practice skills and knowledge. In addition, he mentions that Serious Games are a certain type of game that was design with pure entertainment not as it's primary purpose. The following table demonstrates the four concepts and offers examples, illustrations along with a brief description of each.

<p>Gamification (Educational): Class Dojo Is an Educational Gamification tool designed to keep students on track and manages student behavior. Several game elements are used like avatars and progress. It gives the opportunity for real time feedback. Can be accessed online or downloaded as an app.</p>	
<p>Game-Based Learning (Digital): Ten Frame Game This is an online educational game suited for younger learners. The objective is to have fun while learners understand the concept of place value.</p>	
<p>Simulations (Educational): Sid Meier's Civilization It is a simulation that works for computers with Windows and MacOS. The objective of the game is for the user to create a new country while acquiring plenty of social studies and history knowledge along with vocabulary development.</p>	
<p>Serious Games: 3rd World Farmer It's a browser simulation online game that lets the advanced learners experience some of the hardships of farming in a poor country. It's a great alternative for developing character and decision-making. In addition it creates in the learner a sense of self-awareness.</p>	

VI. Motivational Implications between Gamification and Second Language Learning

Personality factors influence dramatically the L2 learning process. Brown (1994) presents several of these and suggests that they contribute positive in successfully learning L2. These factors include: The Affective Domain, Self-Esteem, Inhibition, Risk-Taking, Anxiety, Empathy, Extroversion, Myers-Briggs Character Types, and Motivation. The common denominator between L2 learning or SLA and Gamification is Motivation. According to Shcunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2010), motivation is the psychological process responsible for initiating and continuing goal directed behaviors. It is frequently demonstrated by an individual choice to engage in an activity and the intensity of effort or persistence in the activity (Garris, Ahlers, and Driskell, 2002). There are two types of motivation that are essential in L2 learning and are considered personality factors. These are Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation. But before explaining these two clusters is necessary to understand three motivational concepts that were part of significant studies in L2 learning that

will contribute to enhance the motivational aspects and work with Gamification. These are: Instrumental, Integrative, and Assimilative motivation. The studies conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and demonstrated by Brown (1994), presented Instrumental and Integrative motivation.

“ Instrumental motivation refers to motivation to acquire a language as means for attaining instrumental goals: furthering a career, reading technical material, translation, and so forth. On the other hand Integrative motivation is employed when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of L2 group to identify themselves with and become part of society”.

Another scholar who established a definition towards motivation and L2 learning was Graham (1984). He was able to define Assimilative motivation as:

“ The drive to become an indistinguishable member of the speech community, as it usually requires prolonged contact with the second language culture. Assimilative motivation is characteristic of people who, persons at a very young age, learn a second language and second culture”.

Turning back to Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation, Lepper (1988) explained that when people are intrinsically motivated they tend to take an activity for their own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feeling of accomplishments it evokes. On the other hand when people become extrinsically motivated is to obtain some reward or avoid punishment. According to Muntean (2011), Gamification combines these two types of motivation. In addition the game elements will adjust greatly for the L2 learner. For example by using extrinsic rewards like levels, points, and badges to improve engagement while intrinsically motivating towards the achievement, mastery, autonomy, and sense of belonging. In addition competition, social interaction, and cooperation the second language learner becomes motivated.

a. Perspectives in motivational research

There are six principal perspectives in motivational research that has been linked to Gamification and can be applied to L2 learning: Trait, Behavioristic Learning, Cognitive, Self-determination, Interest, and Emotion explained in the work of Sailer, Hense, Mandl and Kelvers, (2013). Each perspective has its own characteristics that enhance motivation for the L2 learner. For example, the Trait perspective observes motives as individual characteristics and some of the important one that it presents include achievement, need for power, and affiliation (McClelland, 1961; 2009). Many times the L2 learner falls out of place or receive a culture shock and thru the integration of this perspective he or she could survive that socio cultural factor that prevent the learning to happen. On the other hand, Behavioristic Learning is seen as a result of previous experiences, including past positive or negative reinforcement, or stimulus-response bonds (Skinner, 1963). An application of these toward enhancing L2 and Gamification will be to use reflexive journals or sharing experiences thru the creation of an avatar. The Cognitive perspective perceives motivation as a means-ends analysis where is dependent of situation-specific goals, and expectancies regarding the outcome of the situation itself, expectancies of the consequences of the outcome, and the subjective value (Heckhausen, 1977; Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2008). Also the influence on the variables could differentiate a performance intrinsic motivation (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece,

2010). The perspective of Self-determination postulates the psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and social relatedness. The fulfilments of these needs are necessary in intrinsic motivation and can be extrinsically perceived by the fulfilment of the needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the other hand, Interest is seen by researchers as an affective and cognitive variable and evolves in content specific and interaction with the environment (Hidi, Renninger, Krapp , 2004). Finally, Emotion can be influenced by instructional strategies as it outlined by researchers as an emotional design of instruction, which works with motivational mechanisms (Astleitner, 2004). All of the previous perspectives have implications for practice in L2 learning thru Gamification. The table below shows some of these implications based on their perspective and adapted from the work of Sailer, Hense, Mandl and Kelvers, (2013).

Perspective	Implications
Trait	"Players with a strong achievement motive are likely to be motivated if Gamification mphasizes achievement, success and progress. Players with a strong power motive are likely to be motivated if Gamification emphasizes status, control and competition. Players with a strong affiliation motive are likely to be motivated if Gamification emphasizes membership".
Behavioristic learning	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification provides immediate feedback in form of positive and negative reinforcement. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification offers rewards".
Cognitive	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification provides a clear and achievable goal. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification highlights the resulting consequences of a goal. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification emphasizes the importance of a persons' action within a given situation. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification fosters mastery orientation regarding goals".
Self-determination	"Players are likely to be motivated if they experience the feeling of competence. Players are likely to be motivated if they experience the feeling of autonomy. Players are likely to be motivated if they experience the feeling of social relatedness".
Interest	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification meets the players' interests and sparks interest for the situational context. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification enhances the feeling of flow by providing direct feedback. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification enhances the feeling of flow by providing a clear goal. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification enables the feeling of flow by adapting the level of difficulty to ones' individual skills and competences".
Emotion	"Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification decreases negative feelings like fear, envy, and anger. Players are likely to be motivated if Gamification increases positive feelings like sympathy Emotionand pleasure".

Table 4. Psychological perspectives and implications

VII. Gamification Apps for Enhancing and Motivating Second Language Learning

The use of Gamification in L2 learning has brought the use of many tools to enhance the language learning process and motivate the learners. It's very important to remember that in a gamified classroom setting the tool will serve a purpose and it shouldn't substitute the target goal of the unit or module. This is also essential in L2 learning. With many tools to choose from in educational technology, the L2 educator needs to use them accordingly to the target audience and combine it with the appropriate language learning approach or strategy. These Gamification tools are frequently used in L2 learning: Duolingo, Class Dojo, Edmodo, Zondle, Socrative, and Brainscape.

a. Duolingo

Is a Gamification language learning translation platform where users progress through several levels. It works for iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, and Android. It covers the areas of speaking, listening, grammar and vocabulary necessary for L2 learning and content is always presented in whole sentences. The user can select between six languages including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, and French. The feedback is immediate and the learner can easily track progress. Educators can use it as part of daily homework. It motivates student-driven work along with communication and collaboration.

b. Class Dojo

Previously in the article, this application was presented as a pure example of Gamification. This main purpose of Class Dojo is to provide the instructor with a platform for student behavior management. It also helps in motivating L2 elementary school learners thru strategies that combine avatars, points, and leaderboards. Parents can be involved and connect with the educator. It track, shares, and evaluate student participation along with immediate feedback. It lets L2 learners adjust to a new language by easing the transition in a flexible way. It can be accessed via the Web interface or an Android or iOS app.

c. Edmodo

It's a safe social networking platform for education with Gamification elements like badges and quests. It can be used as an extension of the classroom for all educational levels. In addition, it has an interface very similar to Facebook. Students can comment on posts, submit assignments, and track their progress. Educators can post polls, open discussion boards, design quizzes, and post assignment. It's a great motivating tool for L2 instruction because it promotes collaborative learning, teamwork, and parents have an account where they can receive feedback from the instructor. In addition the L2 learner can practice spelling and grammar through conversational postings and could create differentiated instruction through small groups and shared folders. Edmodo works with any Web browser, iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, Android, Windows Phone.

d. Zondle

It is a Game Based Learning platform that incorporates Gamification. Using it the educator can create quizzes and has plenty of content. Student will be engaged with the games. Most educators use it as a reward. It's great for homework and practice. The Zondle experience benefits L2 language instruction based on the exercises/quizzes it has. Also the progress tracking and other elements like avatars, leaderboards, and Zollars, which are elements that increases or decreases based on the answers to the quizzes and the engagement. Students can use Zondle thru web browsers, smartphones and tablets.

e. Socrative

Is a dynamic smart student response system that engages students via smart phones, tablets, and laptops, and empowers educators to formative and summative assessing their students. It's a great tool for the L2 classroom because students can answer questions forgetting about the stress involved in trials and errors, which lowers anxiety. It allows the users to import images to the question items and it feature Gamification strategies including live results, immediate feedback, and effortless data analysis.

f. Brainscape

Is a Web based and mobile app platform, which integrates customizable flashcard to track student progress. The method is known as confidence based repetition. It's a great enhancer and motivator for L2 vocabulary learning. In addition, it provides automatic feedback, reinforcement and specific phrases in the target language along with sentence construction. Audio is provided for the language cards. It demands students to think critically about their learning.

VIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be established that the use of Gamification in L2 learning contributes positively to the learning experience based on the information presented. At the same time learning interventions need to be taken with precaution. Gamification helps the L2 learner in plenty of personality factors. In addition the learner moves forward from an introverted mode of shyness and more motivated based on positive feedback and the game elements used. Gamifying the L2 classroom enhances the learning of writing, reading, and speaking and motivates collaboration and interaction. Through Gamification the educator is able to create meaningful experiences that will move away from just a game thinking mentality to a techno-constructivist mentality. To achieve success with Gamification in L2 learning the objectives and goals need to be aligned and have formal assessment criteria. According to Fogg (2009), by selecting the proper tools positive changes in behavior will happen. There are still plenty of challenges in the L2 classroom, and by understanding the importance of Gamification in L2 learning they will be confronted with initiatives where students will be in charge of their own learning. Finally, how L2 learners work with intrinsic motivation is another challenge. Most of all, when extrinsic motivation through the use of reward systems could interfere with the main learning objectives and instead of enhancing motivation create a stage of boredom that could limit leaning the target language. There's still plenty of research to be done in the field of Gamification and Second Language Learning in order to have

enough empiric evidence to sustain a theory. But as the article explained, by combining Gamification along with some of the new technology trends and L2 approaches and strategies, the L2 learner and becoming motivated is a strong possibility.

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Can Gamification be introduced within primary classes?

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Abstract

Training through gamification is everyday a more evident reality in Primary Education classes. The teachers' view about this has been modified as it is shown in the study published by aDeSe in 2012. However, does it really have place in the students' curricular development in the primary education stage? For the sake of responding to this question, we have carried out a descriptive study about the opinion that the future teachers from primary education have got about this "new" form of implementing the curricular contents. The sample, conformed by 244 students of second course of Media Literacy and Didactic Application of ICT, answered a questionnaire consisting of 23 questions, of which 14 are devoted to determine the attitude that future teachers have facing videogames and the remaining 9 indicate the educative dimension that they give to it within the primary class. The most significant initial result we find is that while they consider having a proactive view as users of this, women are less active within this tool, although the female teachers conclude, however, that it could be an attractive resource for the learning of the youngest students.

Keywords

ITC; videogames; training; pupils; curriculum; primary education

¿Puede entrar la Gamificación en las aulas de primaria?

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Resumen

La formación a través de la gamificación es cada día una realidad más latente de las aulas de educación Primaria. La visión que los docentes van teniendo de estos se ha ido modificando tal y como lo señala el estudio publicado en 2012 por aDeSe. No obstante, ¿realmente tienen cabida en el desarrollo curricular de los estudiantes de la etapa de educación primaria? En aras de poder responder a esta cuestión se ha realizado un estudio descriptivo de las opiniones que los futuros maestros de dicha etapa educativa tienen de esta "nueva" forma de implementar los contenidos curriculares. La muestra conformada por 244 estudiantes de 2º curso de la materia Educación Mediática y Aplicación didáctica de las TIC, respondió a un cuestionario compuesto por 23 preguntas, de las cuales 14 están destinadas a determinar la actitud que los futuros maestros tienen ante los videojuegos y las 9 restantes nos indican la dimensión educativa que les otorgan dentro del aula de primaria. El resultado inicial que más destaca es que si bien consideran tener una visión proactiva como usuarios de estos, las mujeres son menos activas en este medio, aunque ellas concluyen, no obstante, que pueden ser un recurso atractivo para el aprendizaje de los más jóvenes.

Palabras clave

TIC; videojuegos; formación; alumnos; curriculum; educación primaria

I. Introduction

The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has meant that different nature elements or elements with different perspectives have been developing not only under the safety net of Internet but also under the several tools which had been created before the technology peak. One of these tools is the videogames, which since their launch in the USA in the seventies up to today, have gone through various phases of love and hatred on the part of society. Right now, little by little and overcoming or moving away from their mercantilist view, we believe that they have opened a gap in the academic areas of children, youngsters and teenagers and not such teenage people today.

Covered by Horizon 2014 report (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estraday Freeman, 2014) as a tool which is worthy to take into account as regards the formation of children and youth from today, we consider that it is necessary to check if the trainers of social, political, educational and economic leaders from tomorrow share the same perspective. In the study we have presented below, we approach the reader to open and holistic perspective, where it is revealed how teachers at the initial training consider that while they are not expert players nor excessively keen on them, it can be a tool which invigorates and brings closer the curriculum contents of Primary Education, as well as the data collected in the report carried out by the *Tomorrow* Project (2008) or those collected in 2012 by the aDeSe association.

II. Is there an educational vision in videogames?

As Morales notes (2013), Pedagogy has always tried to innovate teaching, either from the addition of new resources or through the design of paradigms or theories covering the changes, sometimes turbulent, by which society passes, and one of those resources and also one of those changes is the incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to teaching-learning processes. The different legal regulations which have been developed in recent decades, such as the Organic Education Act (2006) and the Organic Act of Educational Quality Improvement (2013), make reference to a new way of teaching and learning, based on a series of competences called basic. In both cases, it is mentioned the digital and informational ability of students, which must be achieved after having completing the primary stages. While in the early stages (Early Childhood Education) it is made reference to the need to initiate students into a digital and media literacy, in all the reviews made in these regulations, the emphasis is put on the development a critical view of digital media which are now available to everyone. In conclusion, the learning process of the twenty-first century means that the students can have access, analyze, evaluate, create and consider in order to lead curricular practice into action (Hobbs, 2010) supporting them in ICT.

Against this background of technological excess, some resources are being adapted to the environment, whereas others evolve to survive in the technological jungle, which has seen the rise of Web 2.0 tools born under the fast and explosive growth of Internet. One of these technologies is videogames. Demonized by some people, when back in the 50s they ousted traditional television the throne of the means devoted to occupy our leisure and free time, being classified as violent, as submitting an excessive number of erotic scenes, as encouraging the consumption of various substances, as giving a vision of life far away from reality or presenting the image of a distorted woman, as promoting obesity and poor diet, as isolating the subject from its close family, and so

on (Marín, 2014; Marín and Maldonado, 2014). Such aspects have not made the advantages or positive views which they can have of them, have been despised, since they allow us to develop and exercise creativity, imagination and symbolic games; to work social skills in the socialization processes of the individuals and the repetition of behaviours until perfection; to promote the increase of attention, motivation for learning, the changing of unhealthy behaviours, the learning doing or the active learning (GBL); to appreciate different cultural values, the development of critical thinking, construction and reconstruction of knowledge, the creation of reflection processes (in and for the action), the collaboration, the ability to react to adverse situations, the faculty to solve problems, the development of spatial skills, the effective use of information; to enhance attention and memory, verbal and nonverbal language, the ability to work collaboratively and cooperatively, the desire for self-improvement, the eye-hand skills, etc. (Killiemuir & McFarlane, 2003; Barendiegt & Bekker, 2011; Watson, Christopher & Harris, 2011; Contreras, 2013; Alamri, Hassan, Hassain, Al-Qurishi, Aldukhayit & Hossain, 2014; Marín, 2012; Marín, 2014; Marín and Martín, 2014; Márquez, 2013; Mortaraa, Catalanoa, Bellottib, Fiuccic, Houry-Panchettid & Petridise, 2014), elements which make possible their incorporation into classrooms at all educational levels. It is true, as García Cortés and Lacasa (2014) point out, that video games named as "*serious games*" have been used for a long time in the classrooms. However, our vision tries to incorporate into the classroom methodology those videogames used by students in their leisure time, so that when relating something daily, something that for them means a relaxation and pleasure moment, and which will not be linked to the training strictly speaking, the student will acquire the contents in a playful way without being aware that he or she is "studying" (Azorín, 2014). In this line, we find the results presented by Williamson in 2009, which reflected that 60% of teachers taking part in his study about the videogames use in the British classrooms, weighed positively to include them in the teaching methodologies and 55% of them was using them with good results. The works by Cortés, Gómez, and LaCasa (2012) related to the introduction of a non-serious or educational game like *Sims 3* or by Téllez and Iturriaga (2014), based on the *Assassin's Creed* saga or by Nieto, Téllez and Cannon (2014) with the *Body and Brian Connection* game, is also a proof that this reality is gaining a greater presence every day. As Valverde, Alicia and Revuelta indicate (2013: 149), "which better way to learn without being aware of it and to be able to transmit and evoke concepts which are present in our minds".

III. Methodology

The research we present is born from the question: Can videogames modulate the learning behaviours? Can they be tools helping to develop the learning in an effective and efficient way? From these questions the starting objectives have been:

1. Determining whether videogames are elements which can modulate behaviours, affecting the belief systems, values, attitudes, aptitudes of students.
2. Clarifying whether videogames are a technological resource which can help in understanding of the curriculum contents.
3. Establishing whether the methodological systems must employ them in the classrooms in order to improve their atmosphere.
4. Checking whether education should take them into account from a didactic and pedagogical perspective.

IV. Data Collection Instrument

a. Instrument Construction: reliability and validity

For the collection of the data, the survey method was used, and within this the questionnaire technique is found. In this case, we used the same employed by Marín (2014), which is composed of 23 items, with different scales of answer, grouped into two dimensions. So, items 1 to 14 form part of the dimension 1 called "Attitude towards videogames". They had an answer choice of a nominal kind: yes, no, not know/no answer. The second group, which has been entitled "Videogames and the primary classroom", is composed of 9 items with a Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree. In order to verify that the questionnaire measured what it had been set in the objectives to be achieved and that in turn it answered to the starting questions, it was tested for validity and reliability.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach alpha test has been applied. Once the test was performed to the whole questionnaire, a reliability of 0,903 was obtained, what, according to Mateo (2012) can be considered as high.

Carried out the discrimination item by item (see Table 1), it was found that the reliability of the instrument ranged between 0,903 and 0,896, so that reliability can be assured in each of the items.

Item	Conbrach Alpha
15. Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	0,903
16. Distinguishing the body parts.	0,893
17. Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	0,891
18. Identifying primary and secondary colours.	0,886
19. Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	0,892
20. Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	0,885
21. Development of inductive thought.	0,890
22. Development of the visual and retentive memory.	0,896
23. Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	0,892

Table1. Reliability item by item. Source: Own production

Next, it has been considered to carry out an exploratory analysis between the scale variables proposed in the instrument, seeking to endow it with validity, in order to find out the latent factors existing in the same; for this purpose, and as Marín García shows (2011), we have performed the following analysis: descriptive statistics of the variables and an exploratory factorial analysis with the maximum authenticity.

As regards the descriptive statistics of the instrument (see Table 2), it can be observed that the scale variables ranging between the 241 and 244 cases; the minimum of the most of them is 1 and the maximum is 5, coinciding with the opposed extreme values. With respect to the average, the values range between 3,51 and 3,91, so we can maintain that there is a considerable variability

(minimum and maximum values) and a moderate degree of use in the variables by the participating students (averages).

	Min.	Max.	M.	S.
15. Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	1	5	3,59	,983
16. Distinguishing the body parts.	1	5	3,63	,902
17. Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	1	5	3,53	,906
18. Identifying primary and secondary colours.	1	5	3,72	,911
19. Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	1	5	3,71	,836
20. Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	1	5	3,54	,862
21. Development of inductive thought.	1	5	3,57	,821
22. Development of the visual and retentive memory.	1	5	3,91	,788
23. Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	1	5	3,90	,868

Table 2. Descriptive study of dimension 2. Source: Own elaboration

In conclusion, in view of the results it can be observed that two latent factors will exist within the instrument scale.

Finally, it has been carried out an exploratory factorial analysis with the maximum authenticity with the intention of subjecting to validation the scalar items, as it has been indicated before, giving as a result that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin adequacy measure gives a value of 0,837, close to 1, which indicates that it is feasible to perform the exploratory factorial analysis. Also, the Bartlett test of sphericity throws significance ($p < 0,001$).

Factor	Total	Initial self-values		Sums of the saturations to the extraction square			Sums of the saturations to the rotation square		
		% of the variance	% accumulated	Total	% of the variance	% accumulated	Total	% of the variance	% accumulated
I like playing videogames	4,514	50,156	50,156	4,075	45,283	45,283	2,673	29,703	29,703
I read specialised magazines about videogames	1,337	14,857	65,013	,914	10,159	55,443	2,317	25,739	55,443
I read through Internet everything which is new related to videogames	,708	7,869	72,882						
I read in the case the classification of the videogame before using it	,602	6,687	79,569						
I like making comments of the videogames with my friends or acquaintances	,537	5,963	85,532						
I take part in forums or chats about videogames	,421	4,682	90,213						
I have taken part in online "parties"	,371	4,122	94,335						
I imitate the characters from the videogames I play with	,279	3,100	97,435						
I like playing videogames for adults	,231	2,565	100,000						

Table 3. Total variance explained. Source: Own production

Subsequently, we have analyzed the variance extracted by the retained factors. As you can check, there are two factors or scales on which all the results are based: the first of them explains the 45,28% and the second one, the 55,44% of the variance, implying that these nine items or questions from the questionnaire are divided into two scales or factors.

Next, it has been analyzed the factorial matrix and the rotated factors matrix of the items studied. As it can be checked in Table 4 we have obtained two factors, on which the scalar items are based. In the rotated factors matrix (see Table 5), it is stated which item or question from the questionnaire would be classified in each factor: in other words, a scale would be composed by the items 23, 20, 19, 22, 21 and 17, and the other, by the items 20, 21, 16, 18, 15 and 17; items 20, 21 and 17 could be included in any of the two factors, although due to their value, the items 20 and 21 would be in the first scale and the item 17 would belong to the second scale.

	Factor	
	1	2
Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	,801	
Distinguishing the body parts.	,694	-,459
Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	,691	
Identifying primary and secondary colours.	,686	-,413
Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	,666	,371
Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	,651	,316
Development of inductive thought.	,630	
Development of the visual and retentive memory.	,625	
Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	,592	,347

Extraction method: Maximum authenticity. ^a. 2 extracted factors. 4 interactions required

Table 4. Factorial matrix. Source: Own production

	Factor	
	1	2
Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	,736	
Distinguishing the body parts.	,711	,418
Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	,687	
Identifying primary and secondary colours.	,666	
Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	,665	,307
Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).		,813
Development of inductive thought.		,774
Development of the visual and retentive memory.		,590
Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	,328	,567

*Extraction method: Maximum authenticity. Rotation method: Varimax normalization with Kaiser. ^a. The rotation has converged in 3 interactions

Table 5. Rotated factors matrix. Source: Own production

b. Population and sample

The population participating in this study was the students from the Primary Education Grade, in the Faculty of Education Sciences at the University of Cordova. The participant sample was finally consisted of the students enrolled in the course Media Literacy and Didactic Application of ICT, a compulsory subject in the second year of the degree. Given the compulsory nature of the subject, it was decided to administer the instrument in its sessions, as in such a way the students participation would be higher. Finally, it has been obtained a participation of 244 subjects, from whom 161 were women and 83 were men. According to their age, we have checked that it is located at the frequency of 19 years old (136 subjects), followed by the 20 years old (99 subjects) and ending with 21 years old (9 subjects).

Considering the contingency sex-age (see Figure 1) it can be checked that the presence of women is higher in the three age ranges identified.

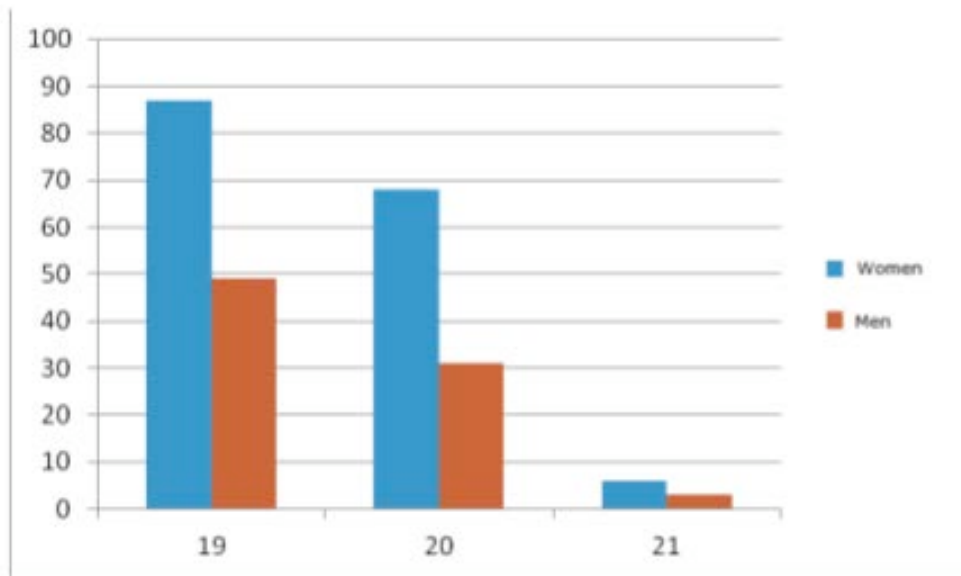


Figure 1. Sample distribution according to the age. Source: Own production

V. Results

a. Descriptive study

As it can be found in table 7 (Dimension 1: study of frequencies and percentages) it is determined that students participating in this study tend not to like playing videogames, and therefore they do not read specialised magazines on the topic nor they participate in chats, forums or online parties about videogames unlike the results obtained in the study of Marín (2014) where the sample studied liked videogames, playing videogames and reading specialised magazines, as well as talking with their colleagues and friends about them. However, it is significant that they consider that videogames can be educational, that they like to there be more in this line and the fact that they have used any of educational character (items 10, 12 and 13).

	YES	NO	NK/NA
1. I like playing videogames	104/42,6%	137/52,1%	3/1,2%
2. I read specialised magazines about videogames	6/2,5%	238/97,5%	
3. I read through Internet everything which is new related to videogames	10/4,1%	234/95,9%	
4. I read in the case the classification of the videogame before using it	49/20,1%	194/78,3	4/1,6%
5. I like making comments of the videogames with my friends or acquaintances	80/24,6%	161/74,2%	3/1,2%
6. I take part in forums or chats about videogames	7/2,9%	233/95,5%	4/1,6%
7. I have taken part in online "parties"	26/10,7%	214/87,7%	4/1,6%
8. I imitate the characters from the videogames I play with	9/3,7%	234/95,9%	1/0,4%
9. I like playing videogames for adults	82/25,4%	165/67,6%	17/7
10. Videogames can be educational	177/72,5%	57/23,4%	10/4,1%
11. The teacher uses videogames in class	30/12,3%	189/77,5%	25/10,2%
12. I would like there would be more videogames	189/77,5%	42/17,2%	13/5,3%
13. I have placed educational videogames in some occasions	162/66,4%	68/27,9%	14/5,7%
14. Playing videogames affects my studies negatively	35/14,3%	148/60,7%	61/25%

Table 7. Dimension: Study of frequencies and percentages. Source: Own production

As it can be observed in Table 8, the students participating in this research agrees that videogames can be seen as a tool to work collaboratively and to help to develop the curriculum contents related to natural sciences, particularly with the human body in general. They are positioned in the same way for the contents related to the visual arts and the development of heuristic and inductive thought, as well as the visual and retentive memory. Similarly, they consider agreeing with the fact that educational games help in the inductive learning and with the basic concepts of success and failure, up and down, inside-out, before-after and front-back.

2. Dimension: Videogames and primary classroom		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Learning to work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork.	f. 11	22	56	122	33
		% 4,5%	9%	23%	50%	13,5%
2.	Distinguishing the body parts.	f. 7	13	80	107	36
		% 2,9%	5,3%	32,8%	43,9%	14,9%
3.	Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs.	f. 9/	17	77	115	25
		% 3,7%	7%	31,6%	47,1%	10,2%
4.	Identifying primary and secondary colours.	f. 8	13	58	126	39
		% 3,3%	5,3%	23,8%	51,6%	16%
5.	Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake).	f. 5	15	52/	139	30
		% 2%	6,1%	22,5%	57%	12,3%
6.	6. Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment).	f. 8	15	92	104	27
		% 2,5%	6,1%	37,7%	42,6%	11,1%
7.	Development of inductive thought.	f. 7	11	83	123	20
		% 2,9%	4,5%	34%	50,4%	8,2%
8.	Development of the visual and retentive memory.	f. 4	7	43	144	46
		% 1,6%	2,9%	17,6%	59%	18,9%
9.	Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-outside, before-after, front-back.	f. 6	7	47	127	55
		% 2,5%	2,9%	19,3%	52%	22,5%

Table 8. Dimension 2: Videogames and primary classroom. Source: Own production

b. T test

Once the Student t test for independent samples ($ns = 0,05$), taking the sex as the classification variable, it is found that the existence of significant differences in all the questionnaire items is in favour of men as regard the items "Learning to Learning work cooperatively and collaboratively through teamwork", "Distinguishing the body parts", "Identifying the primary and secondary colours", "Development of "heuristic" thought (test-mistake)", "Development the inductive thought", "Development of visual and retentive memory" and "Understanding the concept of success and failure, up-down, inside-out, before-after, front-back" and in favour of women as regard the items "Learning the synchrony between the upper and lower limbs" and "Self-regulation of the self-learning (continuous assessment)".

c. Bivaried correlation

In regards to the r coefficient test by Pearson to determine the existence of correlation between the items of the second dimension, in Table 9 the results related to dimension 2 are available, - remember that it is the one with the answer modality of scalar type-, and you can check that items have a full correlation with a significance level of $n=0,001$, although the relationship between them varies according to the categorization made by Pérez, García, Gil and Galán in 2009, in response to each item, among the low of item 19 to 15 ($r=0,248$), the average of item 22 with the 16 ($r=0,330$) and the high of the item 16 with the item 18 ($r=0,647$).

		Item 15	Item 16	Item 17	Item 18	Item 19	Item 20	Item 21	Item 22	Item 23
Item 15	R	1,000	,448**	,456**	,493**	,248**	,408**	,427**	,349**	,262**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 16	R	,448**	1,000	,615**	,647**	,403**	,450**	,385**	,330**	,400**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 17	R	,456**	,615**	1,000	,551**	,439**	,500**	,425**	,290**	,379**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 18	R	,493**	,647**	,551**	1,000	,468**	,587**	,440**	,380**	,455**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 19	R	,248**	,403**	,439**	,468**	1,000	,588**	,487**	,429**	,579**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 20	R	,408**	,450**	,500**	,587**	,588**	1,000	,580**	,468**	,545**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 21	R	,427**	,385**	,425**	,440**	,487**	,580**	1,000	,495**	,456**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 22	R	,349**	,330**	,290**	,380**	,429**	,468**	,495**	1,000	,564**
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Item 23	R	,262**	,400**	,379**	,455**	,579**	,545**	,456**	,564**	1,000
	P	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

** . The correlation is significant at the level 0,01 (bilateral).

Table 9. Descriptive study dimension 2. Source: Own production

VI. Conclusions

Quintanal in 2013 (419), carried out a study in which he suggested participants developing the curriculum in the subjects of Physics and Chemistry by means of mini-kits. The main result that he concludes is that through them autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem of students increased. He also concluded that "it helps to fulfil the educational objectives in terms of contents, skills (especially social ones) and values; it promotes consideration of the learning rates, of teamwork and of the progress of intellectual skills; it develops and enhances the students' ICT skills and the consideration of them as creators of scientific content which can share with their peers". Following this line, the results presented with the objective 1, indicate that the attitudes of prospective teachers to educational videogames is positive (Contreras, 2013) following the line of Herrero, del Castillo, Monjalet, García-Varela, Checa and Gómez (2014), which may be included within the development of methodologies within the classroom when exercising their profession. However, it is noteworthy that their attitude towards them is negative in contrast with the results obtained by the study conducted by Marín in 2014 on a sample of the same kind. It is significant to note that perhaps the fact that the study sample by Marín (2014) was made up of more men than women, because as it also happens in the studies by Graves, Ridgeers and Scratton (2008), Hamlen (2011) and by Lam, Sit and McManus (2011), where the male population indicates they play more and they consider them to be more attractive. Therefore, this divergence has been obtained within the general overview of videogames.

As regards the objectives 2, 3 and 4, and like the results by Watson, Mong and Harris (2011), we can conclude that active learning, as well as the development of heuristic thought (Killiemuir and McFarlane, 2003), the knowledge construction and collaboration can be developed through the usage of videogames in the classroom (Solano, Forero, Gino, Cavanzo and Pinilla, 2013). Another aspect whose learning is considered to be feasible of being developed through videogames is the content related to natural sciences and to the knowledge of the human body, coinciding with the study by Shane, Pettit, Margenthal and Smith (2008). The results obtained related to the

overemphasis of participatory and collaborative behaviours are in line with those achieved by Greitemeyer and Mügge (2014).

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Strategies of collaborative work in the classroom through the design of video games

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Abstract

At the present time, the use of video games goes beyond mere amusement or entertainment due to its potential for developing capacities, dexterity and skills. Thus, video games have extended to environments like that of education, serving as didactic resources within dynamics that respond to the interests and necessities of the 21st century student. In this study, we approach the design of video games in initial teacher training. In this respect, we aim to collect the student's views regarding the learning process of the different tools used for designing video games within a framework of collaborative learning. The investigation is approached through a quantitative methodology applying a 28-item questionnaire on the learning experience of designing video games. We used a sample of 200 second-year students majoring in Childhood Education during the 2013/2014 academic course. The results obtained show that the students value in a positive way the collaborative learning methodology for mastering the video games designing tools.

Keywords

Video games, collaborative learning, higher education, ICT

Estrategias de trabajo colaborativo en el aula a través del diseño de videojuegos

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Resumen

En la actualidad, el uso de los videojuegos va más allá de la mera diversión o entreteniéndolo, debido a su potencial para el desarrollo de capacidades, destrezas y habilidades. Por tanto, los videojuegos se han extendido a ámbitos como el de la educación, empleándose como recursos didácticos dentro de dinámicas que responden a los intereses y necesidades del alumnado del siglo XXI. En este estudio, abordamos el diseño de videojuegos en la formación inicial docente. Al respecto, pretendemos recoger las opiniones del alumnado en relación al aprendizaje de las distintas herramientas empleadas para el diseño de videojuegos en el marco del aprendizaje colaborativo. La investigación la abordamos desde una metodología cuantitativa, a través del uso de un cuestionario de 28 ítems, sobre la experiencia de aprendizaje vivida en el diseño de videojuegos. Se ha trabajado con una muestra de 200 estudiantes pertenecientes al segundo curso de la titulación de Grado de Maestro especialidad en Educación Infantil, durante el curso académico 2013/2014. Los resultados obtenidos muestran que el alumnado valora positivamente la metodología del aprendizaje colaborativo para la adquisición del dominio de las herramientas utilizadas en el diseño de videojuegos.

Palabras clave

Videojuegos, Aprendizaje colaborativo, Educación Superior, TIC

I. Introduction

In our current society, Information and Communication Technologies (hereinafter ICTs) have become an everyday tool being that, among other things, provide us instant access to information from any location and contribute in a significant way to the communication processes. In the field of education, the importance of ICTs is even greater, as they enable stimulation and language development, increased self-esteem, motivation and social interaction (Díaz, Reche & Lucena, 2005). In this respect, Martin & Tyner (2012) state the importance of the school in its role to permeate the students with a series of essential values and skills in order not to confuse the schooling and usage of ICTs as a technological acquisition intended to create consumers and users of new technologies and that prevents seeing the purposes sought by education through the use of these means. In this sense, ICTs appear as a resource of great value to promote participation in all sectors of society, particularly in education, where a series of advantages can be noted, such as (Cabero & Córdoba 2009):

- Helping to overcome the limitations derived out of cognitive, sensory and motor disabilities.
- Promoting independence and autonomy.
- Fostering communication.
- Timesaving for the acquisition of skills and abilities.
- Facilitating diagnosis.
- Encouraging an individualized education where everyone can advance at their own pace, which is of great importance for people with disabilities. (p.73)

In this concern, the educational centers have progressively adapted to the new social demands, introducing technological improvements that are not only limited to a classroom with computer equipment, but that are targeted, for example, to design work dynamics that include the use of learning platforms, tablets, digital whiteboards or even didactic video games, which is the main focus of this study.

In this regard, it should be highlighted that the intervention design shown in this study is focused in designing video games through a collaborative learning methodology to develop a series of essential skills for the initial teacher training, such as:

- Knowing and mastering the user's level in the ICTs field.
- Knowing the learning implications of ICTs, particularly, of television during early childhood.
- Approaching field analysis through an observational methodology using ICTs, documentation and audiovisuals.
- Encouraging initiation experiences to ICTs.
- Analyzing audiovisual languages and their learning implications.
- Controlling and following-up on the educational process, particularly, teaching and learning through the mastering of necessary techniques and strategies.

It is therefore not a Game-Based Learning (GBL) strategy since this would be the second stage of the investigation, which takes place as the video games designed in the Early Education classroom are implemented.

II. Initial Teacher Training as a Response to 21st Century Schooling

The introduction of learning dynamics in classrooms of any educational stage requires several aspects- teacher training being the most decisive element. In this regard, prospective teachers should acquire a qualified education in order to be able to respond to the new student profile featured in today's classrooms. In this respect, Martin & Tyner (2012) consider that these "new literacies" are neither more nor less than another addition to rudimentary, yet still necessary, literacy, since the large majority of information used in the 21st century comes from digital resources. On the other hand, Martin (2007) points out that learning when to use the new technology equipment is essential provided that is supplemented with didactic training. Additionally, due to a fast-evolving digital era, teachers should be constantly acquiring new technology skills, thus making lifelong training essential to adapt to the changing needs of our society. On the other hand, Díaz, Reche & Lucena (2005), show that in order to be able to achieve satisfactory teaching and learning dynamics, it is necessary to address aspects, such as:

- The educational contents: these should adapt to the culture and the context that we live.
- Improving the infrastructures: to be able to include all these IT resources, which provide access to information and didactic online contents.
- A better organization of the educational system: to be able to provide customized training for all, motivating those institutions that promote and offer courses that respond to the demands of various groups such as adult literacy and usage of new IT resources.

Finally, De la Peña (2011) emphasizes that we won't be able to predict the future, but what we should be certain about is that there will be more technology within our reach and that education will continue being a basic necessity for all of society.

III. Video Games as a New Learning Tool

Video games have been considered for years as resources exclusively designed to target leisure, amusement or entertainment needs. However, if we analyze closely the elements that comprise a video game (script, time, goals, environment, main characters...), we can observe that many of them contain pedagogic components of great value in regards to their design. Nevertheless, in order to implement Video Games-Based Learning methodologies, it is crucial to analyze the proper title selection in terms of the intended goals. In this sense, "the teacher must have clear criteria for planning its usage and integration in the classroom; know the different game types and their time requirements, the existence of various strategies, etc." (Gros, 2009, p. 256). In this respect, we can mention, for example, a mythical strategy game that had great repercussion worldwide, as was Age of Empires (1997). This game showed the features of different ages (Stone Age, tools, Bronze...), as well as civilizations (Greek, Persian, Phoenician...). The goal was to defeat the other civilizations through the management of resources (wood, stone, gold....), which allowed the construction of buildings with different essential functions for the achievement of the goal. To all this we must add the selection of numerous campaigns that transported the user to the eras of Alexander the Great, Archimedes or Joanna the Mad, while turning the player into the main character of this history chapter. Other video games applied in learning methodologies are, for instance, the classic *Carmen Sandiego en el Mundo*, where students have to catch a felon travelling from one country to the other and learning things such as the country's currency, its flag colors,

etc. (Gros, 2000); as well as some titles such as *Deus Ex*, *Half-Life*, *The Sims*, *Rise of Nations*, *SWAT IV*, *Civilization*, *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* whose structure is far more complex due to the diversity of settings in which the main character is immersed and the elements that he can interact with in order to reach the goals proposed and that, because of the number of possibilities and alternatives to solve the enigmas posed, require the development of skills (Gee, 2005). In this sense, as Marín, Ramírez and Cabero (2010) stated, the video games are shown as resources that encourage learning and motivation in students by having an interactive, accessible and dynamic nature.

As for the educational possibilities of videogames, it's worth noting, among others (García Marín 2005 of and; Pindado, 2005; Pérez - Latorre, 2011; Morales2013):

- Increased motivation for learning
- Development of creativity and imagination.
- Enhancing the learning ability to learn.
- Strengthens self-esteem and self-concept.
- Development of critical and reflexive thinking.
- Promotes collaborative and cooperative learning.

Ultimately, video games comprise an important didactic resource whose development and design should be part of the initial teacher training of any stage. This study shows the learning process followed for designing and developing video games used in Early Childhood Education College programs. Several IT tools were used for its making with specific roles that allow preparing different video games elements, such as those detailed in the next section.

IV. Video Games Designed Through a Collaborative Learning Methodology

Nowadays there are many tools intended for designing educational video games - one of them being *e-ADVENTURES*, a software developed by the Complutense University of Madrid, that facilitates creating interactive games under two visual modalities: 3rd person (the main characters appear on the screen) and 1st person (omission of the main character). An example of the video game type that can be created with this tool is found on the worldwide hit known as *The Secret of Monkey Island* (1990). This game was a graphic adventure in which the lead character had to interact with different characters and/or scene elements to attain his goals. In addition to this tool, there are others such as *Alice* that allows creating 3D animations through a relatively easy-to-use interface which enables creating stories, interactive games or videos; and *MissionMaker* which allows creating 3D landscapes where the main character exists in the first person. However, no specific tool for designing video games was used in this study; instead, we used software whose main goal is creating an e-learning course, as is the case of *CourseLab*. The substantiation of using this resource in learning dynamics is found in a series of aspects, such as:

1^o. It is a free tool in its 2.4 version

2^o. It has a similar setting to MS Office, which is a very familiar program to the overall student population.

3°. The insertion process of the different video game elements in this software is very intuitive and open and is not "corseted" in sections that are also comprised of subsections, making the procedure a much more complex one while hindering the learning process.

4°. *Courselab* integrates the so-called *Actions*, that allow students "to program" different types of interactions based on the user's intention without needing IT knowledge. This process is set up in 3 stages: Events, Actions and Objects.

5°. The final result is produced in *HTML* format which allows for a smooth integration in websites, educational blogs, learning platforms. Etc.

6°. It allows inserting any type of multimedia element such as audio, video, JAVA applications, Shockwave, Flash...

7°. Ultimately, it is a tool constantly updated that adapts to the continuous changes produced in browsers, add-ons, plugins, etc.

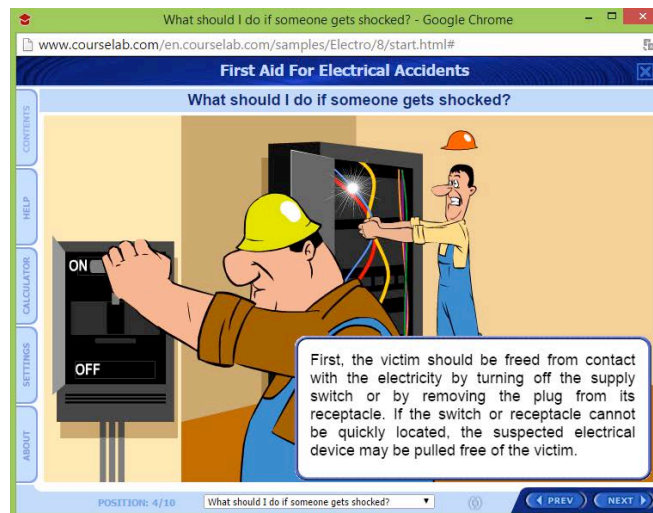


Figure 1 shows an example of the type of materials that can be made using *Courselab*.
Fuente: <http://www.courselab.com/en.courselab.com/samples/Electro/8/start.html#>

The learning dynamic carried out in this study is a product of the joint work of two subjects taught in the second year of the Early Childhood Education College program: Planning and Innovation in Early Childhood Education and Media Education and Educational Dimension of the ICTs.

The former is taught in the first semester of the academic year and allows students, among other things, to acquire the basic knowledge for preparing and developing a didactic programming as well as a didactic unit that will serve as basis for designing the video game. The students will also learn how to pinpoint learning objectives from the general information contained in the regulation in force as well as to establish the contents, methodology and corresponding evaluation approaches to outline a series of activities to be carried out with certain resources that allow students to achieve these objectives. All these elements will form the context of a videogame that meets the educational needs of students depending on the course of the stage where they are. On the other hand, the second subject is taught in the second semester of the academic year and it

will allow the future teacher to acquire the necessary skills for creating a videogame. In this regard, it should be noted that said degree is comprised by 3 class-groups, and thus, a total of 4 teachers intervene in said dynamic who will coordinate amongst themselves at least 4 times per year (twice per semester). This process is divided in several phases specified below:

1. Introduction Phase: It exposes students to the methodology used for teaching the subject while focusing on the group creation of a videogame as a point of interest. At this time, we note the importance of considering the entire body of work completed in this first-year subject, since it will comprise the core issue of the resource, as well as the reference for the goals, contents and evaluation approaches. In this sense, we emphasize the importance of carrying out an authentic collaborative learning, since it is fundamental that each member of the group masters the technique of each of the tools used in order to pass the individual final exam (Domingo, 2008; Moraña, 2011; Torrego and Black 2012).
2. Technique Mastery Acquisition Phase: Upon this time, it will be explained to the students all and each one of the computer applications that are necessary for creating the video game, which are as follows:
 - *Audacity*: Application for producing and editing audio. This program is essential so that each group can prepare its own narratives and endow the main characters of the videogame with a voice.
 - *Microsoft Windows MovieMaker*: Tool for producing and editing video files. It allows the group to create small audiovisual projects regarding the pursued goals. In the Early Childhood Education phase, the instructional videos are of particular interest due to the psycho-evolutional features of students.
 - *Gimp*: Application for editing and creating images. This tool enables creating environments, characters, and also altering images previously created by hand.
 - *Courselab*: This is the most important tool for creating the videogame, since it allows integrating all the resources produced by the applications above. In this regard, it enables creating interactive elements, integrating web pages with multimedia activities, developing learning paths based on user responses, videogame connection with learning platforms, etc.
3. Scripting Phase: Once the students know the methodology plan as well as the IT tools to be used, they will be asked to write a script for their video games, clearly specifying the following elements: story or plotline, context, main characters, goals, evaluation system and awards, without losing reference of the goals, contents and criteria from the previous (didactic unit) work. "The designer shall apply his conceptualization capacity and knowledge of various multimedia expression areas that may intervene in the realization of the video game as well as his ability to project several aspects and tasks of the audiovisual and multimedia realms". (Morales, 2013, p.107).

4. Video Game Creation Phase: This is the last stage of the dynamic where students will implement all the knowledge covered in the previous phases to create the video game. In the words of Morales (2013), "the designer must maintain at all times an overview of the project covering its fictional world, structure and interaction rules, and its pedagogical approach ... which should also meet his learning expectations." (p. 108).

Regarding the type of video games created by students, most of them are based in stories whose characters must overcome a series of tests in order to reach certain Objects that will allow them to reach to the end. These tests are activities that respond to the previously established goals, contents and criteria. We might say that is a game style similar to that of *Dora the Explorer*. The duration of the complete instruction-teaching process comprises the academic course semester with a total of 70 classroom hours. In the sessions theory and practice are not separated since all classes are both theoretical and practical by following the method known as *EAR*, that is, Explanation, Application and Resolution of doubts. Therefore, in each of the session that are part of the established dynamic, some video game design aspect is explained, followed by immediate group application of said explanation and possible resolution of doubts or difficulties that may come about during the process. This procedure largely ensures that everyone can learn in a satisfactory manner.

V. Investigation Design

a. Objectives

The overall purpose of this study is focused on analyzing the views of students on the collaborative learning experienced in the process of creating a video game. This general objective is achieved by the following goals:

1. Describe the views of university students on the contributions of video games within the process of collaborate learning.
2. Analyze the differences among the views of university students according to gender and age.

b. Participants

The study received an incidental sample of 200 students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Undergraduate Program at the University of Córdoba, for the subjects above. The group of participants is divided by gender as follows: 152 women (76%) and 48 men (24%). Age can be divided into three statistically distinct ranges: 18-22 years old (72.6%), 23-26 years old (22.3%) and 4.1% between 27 and 43 years old.

c. Instrument

To achieve the research objectives established, we applied upon completion of the experience, a Likert scale questionnaire designed to assess the experience of game development in groups with the help of *CourseLab* using 28 items. This quantitative approach was chosen because we thought it would be best suited for this type of students. They do not want to waste time to describe their

experience in class or perform personal interviews and a survey with Likert scale seems a clear and direct method to collect information.

In such items, shown in Table 1, students will assess the level of agreement or disagreement with each statement on a scale of 5 levels (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was designed along the observation in previous years. The pilot test to validate the questionnaire was conducted with 40 people the previous year, with similar characteristics to the final sample. In the questionnaire questions related to ease of use and other applications with the utility of video games to achieve the objectives of the curriculum they are included. These questions were introduced to eliminate biases in data collection, because the students are validating their work.

After collecting and computing the data gathered in this survey, we proceeded with a quantitative analysis using SPSS (version 20.0). Thereupon, we performed Cronbach's reliability test for the instrument using the full sample and obtaining a 0.886, which seemed sufficient. In addition, the instrument has the age, gender and Internet and smartphone or tablet availability as socio-demographic variables.

Additionally and with the intent of gathering information during the development process experience and to help us better understand and appreciate the experience, we have taken into account the contributions collected through participant observation, field notes, student interviews and document analysis. Two teachers participated in the process of collecting information, comparing notes and impressions at the end of each session.

Indicate the level of agreement with the following statements regarding the creation of a video game as a group using *CourseLab* and other programs, according to the following rating scale: Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neither Agree nor Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5).

- 1) *Do you have a computer at home?*
- 2) *From where do you usually access the Internet?*
- 3) *Do you have a tablet?*
- 4) *Do you have a smartphone? (Mobile Phone with Internet)*
- 5) *Do you have internet service?*
- 6) *Empowers collaboration with other colleagues*
- 7) *Facilitates communication between students*
- 8) *Promotes personal relationships with colleagues*
- 9) *Promotes interactions and collaboration among students*
- 10) *Encourages the students to feel part of the group*
- 11) *Stimulates new relationships*

<p>12) Enables connecting with others outside of our class group</p> <p>13) Encourages students to participate</p> <p>14) The application settings are intuitive</p> <p>15) The application settings are easy to use</p> <p>16) The tool does not require prior knowledge of computers</p> <p>17) It facilitates sharing content</p> <p>18) It took great effort learning how to use the tool</p> <p>19) I had difficulties learning how to use the tool</p> <p>20) It took me a long time learning how to use the tool</p> <p>21) There was time during class for the teacher to answer questions which enabled mastering the tool as a fundamental aspect of the process</p> <p>22) Would use CourseLab for curricular development in various areas of the course or level</p> <p>23) Video games help develop the different proposed targets on the core curriculum for Primary Education established in Royal Decree 1513</p> <p>24) Video games are useful for students to delve into the Internet</p> <p>25) Video games are an adaptable activity for current IT support</p> <p>26) Video games are an activity that increases student motivation through the inclusion of multimedia resources and not just text and image</p> <p>27) Digital gaming is an activity that encourages autonomy in students</p> <p>28) Developing video games can foster relationships through the establishment of groups for its implementation</p>
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Table 1: Test of views on the process of collaborative learning with CourseLab, after the group designed a video game.

Participant observation allowed us to be part of the group class during the course of the sessions. It was important to make us feel like a member of the group, experiencing from within that "reality". Through field notes, we collected the events taking place in the classroom; difficulties encountered by students were: learning the technique of making mind maps, questions or issues learning to use the software required for game designing, issues regarding selection, prioritization, etc. These notes contain detailed information on the context of the classroom, as well as the different and continuous social interactions that occurred between groups. The works created as a result of developing the subject favored this analysis, in terms of collecting more information. The documents analyzed, as mentioned above, are mainly working scripts. The quality of these has been part of the learning evaluation process. Finally, unstructured interviews allowed us to steer

questions in a more flexible and open manner, allowing the students to express their ideas, concerns, feelings, etc.

d. Data Analysis

The information collected was analyzed using univariate descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, median and standard deviation for describing students views, estimating averages and analyzing the distribution and dispersion of responses (Pérez, Garcia Gil y Galán, 2009).

To compare student perceptions under different grouping variables, we used a bivariate type of analysis which specifically contrasts mean differences. Also, in the case of variance analysis, multiple comparisons "post hoc" were performed to analyze specific groups among which occur the differences found. To this end, we administered the Tukey test when variances were equal and the Games-Howell test if otherwise (Catena, Ramos and Trujillo, 2003). Finally we estimated the effect size of mean differences using Cohen's *d*, whereas a value of .20 indicates a small effect, a value of .50 a moderate effect and a value of .80 or above a large effect (Cohen, 1977). The data set analysis was performed mainly using the statistical program SPSS v. 20.0. In all tests administered statistical significance was established at a level of $p \leq .05$ (confidence level 95%).

VI. Results and discussion

The description of the opinions of university students on the contributions of video games in the collaborative learning process is performed on the stage of interviews with students and at the stage of validation tools for collecting information.

Table 2 shows the main results of the analysis in order to analyze the opinions of pupils on the usefulness of the activity. Particularly, frequencies and percentages were analyzed according to the block-related activity regarding work items 6 to 28. The question block 1-5 is essentially to rule out individuals who are not part of the group object study.

ITEMS	1		2		3		4		5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
6) Empowered collaboration with other colleagues	3	1,5	12	6	39	19,5	82	41	64	32
7) Facilitates communication between students	7	3,5	10	5	48	24	76	38	59	29,5
8) Promotes personal relationships with colleagues	19	9,5	24	12	84	42	51	25,5	22	11
9) Promotes interactions and collaboration among students	1	0,5	13	6,5	51	25,5	78	39	57	28,5

10) Encourages the students to feel part of the group	8	4	11	5,5	41	20,5	79	39,5	61	30,5
11) Stimulates new relationships	14	7	19	9,5	85	42,5	47	23,5	35	17,5
12) Enables connecting with others outside of our class group	8	4	15	7,5	74	37	62	31	41	20,5
13) Encourages students to participate	3	1,5	6	3	52	26	77	38,5	62	31
14) The application settings are intuitive	1	0,5	11	5,5	96	48	51	25,5	41	20,5
15) The application settings are easy to use	0	0	12	6	87	43,5	59	29,5	42	21
16) The tool does not require prior knowledge of computers	8	4	43	21,5	64	32	47	23,5	38	19
17) It facilitates sharing content	4	2	53	26,5	46	23	52	26	45	22,5
18) It took great effort learning how to use the tool	34	17	48	24	75	37,5	24	12	19	9,5
19) I had difficulties learning how to use the tool	33	16,5	52	26	71	35,5	28	14	16	8
20) It took me a long time learning how to use the tool	34	17	49	24,5	62	31	30	15	25	12,5
21) There was time during class for the teacher to answer questions which enabled mastering the tool as a fundamental aspect of the process	8	4	32	16	20	10	54	27	86	43
22) Would use CourseLab for curricular development in various areas of the course or level	5	2,5	54	27	29	14,5	61	30,5	51	25,5
23) Video games help develop the different proposed targets on the core curriculum for Primary Education established in Royal Decree 1513	2	1	12	6	45	22,5	63	31,5	78	39
24) Video games are useful for students to delve into the Internet	15	7,5	24	12	43	21,5	51	25,5	67	33,5
25) Video games are an adaptable activity for current IT support	4	2	15	7,5	32	16	65	32,5	84	42
26) Video games are an activity that increases student motivation through the	5	2,5	12	6	33	16,5	66	33	84	42

<i>inclusion of multimedia resources and not just text and image</i>											
<i>27) Digital gaming is an activity that encourages autonomy in students</i>	3	1,5	26	13	44	22	56	28	71	35,5	
<i>28) Developing video games can foster relationships through the establishment of groups for its implementation</i>	21	10,5	33	16,5	49	24,5	59	29,5	38	19	

Table 2: Frequency (and percentage) in the different items of the questionnaire (6-28)

The study results show firstly, a set of views regarding the influence of the educational experience for improving learning at an individual level. The majority of university respondents that participated in this experience enabled the understanding of issues and may have favored solving the learning difficulties of the different thematic units.

On the other hand, other reviews are linked to directly influencing the experience for improving social interactions and collaborative learning. The vast majority of students valued very highly the process of developing a strategy game as set in the curriculum.

Processing data from a gender perspective showed no significant differences regarding the perception of usefulness of the tool between men and women. The dispersion of data broken down by gender was only 5%.

As per age, no special differences of opinion were detected between the youngest and the small percentage of older students. In this sense, it can be expected that older people feel less affinity for using video games in education, however, older students also often have greater motivation to learn new teaching techniques, so the dispersion found from the perspective of age was less than 3%.

It should be noted that for the students part of the sample, the implementation of this experience positively influenced teamwork for developing and producing digital games shared through a process of collaborative learning and implemented in *CourseLab*.

VII. Conclusions

This paper analyzed both the individual and group impact within the initial teacher training, for developing video games through the *CourseLab* application as a learning tool for planning a subject. The results showed that the interaction between groups and the improvement of positive classroom climate allowed the achievement of meaningful learning through new tools while expanding the use of video games beyond pure entertainment.

During the course of the sessions, the exchange of ideas and opinions among students, allowed them not only to interact but discuss what was important while generating the construction of

shared knowledge, fostering respect and an appropriate work climate within the group. In this regard, permanent classroom observations about their work along with testimonies from the respondents showed a significant change of attitude towards group work in the university classroom. We have also observed that students can quickly learn how to manage the *CourseLab* software to develop video games, prepare presentations that facilitate communication in the classroom and add many other types of educational resources in digital format (text, sound, images, video, web pages...).

The assessments made by prospective teachers about this tool and its educational applications are quite positive. Therefore, we believe that the use of this resource to develop classroom activities is a realistic and effective integration of ICTs in education, helping to enrich the learning process. Through additional registers used in the experiment, we have compiled a series of reviews that highlight a positive assessment regarding the process and understanding of the main functions of game design. In this case, the theoretical content of the course and solving problems of understanding as well as implementing processes for learning how to learn, resemble a model quite close to the constructivist view of teaching thinking processes for teaching evaluations.

Individual and group involvement contributes to creating a positive climate for guiding individual action as a condition for group action in the construction of parts of the game, which enhances the cooperation of the group activity.

In conclusion, the development of this study was possible due to objectives reasonably achievable. However, we are aware that the number of participants in this research is not large enough to consider that the results are generalizable, so we should collect more data in subsequent years and extend the experience to other degrees.

This preliminary work is important to encourage the development of games as a collaborative tool in teacher training.

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Why do gamers buy 'virtual assets'?

An insight in to the psychology behind purchase behaviour

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Abstract

The present study investigated the phenomenon of buying 'virtual assets' for game avatars. Virtual Assets are items that are bought with real-world money for an avatar in-game. Weapons, items, pets, mounts and skin customisations are the most popular examples. Using a qualitative methodology – in this case Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) – six gamers that regularly bought in-game assets were interviewed. IPA was chosen because of its emphasis on lived experience, and each participant had subjective experiences of gaming and purchase behaviour. Of particular focus in this study were the superordinate themes of motivations for purchase behaviour, the resulting psychological impact on the gamer, the social benefits of gaming and virtual asset purchasing, emotional attachment, self-expression through the avatar, impulsivity versus thoughtfulness in purchase intention, and the impact of a transaction machinery on the 'game experience'. Motivations that were found to be of particular importance were item exclusivity, function, social appeal, and collectability. It was found that virtual items enable the gamer to express themselves, feel real satisfaction, and build lasting friendships. Essentially, virtual assets and gaming mostly had a very positive impact on the participant's psychological wellbeing. Implications for gamers and games production companies are considered.

Keywords

Online gaming; Online purchasing; Buying virtual assets; Interpretative phenomenological analysis; Qualitative research

I. Introduction

Video gaming has evolved from a single-player platform to a multi-player realm where interaction with other players is often a necessity (Pontes & Griffiths, 2014). In order to enter the game, players must first create an avatar, a representation of their self in the game that is used to explore and interact with the virtual environment. When creating an avatar, players can also buy virtual assets to augment and/or enhance their online character. Virtual assets are items or customisations for video game avatars, bases, and characters that are purchased with real money. For researchers, the buying of virtual assets provides an opportunity to try and understand why people become so immersed in games and what motivates gamers to spend real money on items that some would consider as having no value. In a multi-player environment, it becomes clear that the avatars seen on screen are graphical representations of someone real and may be part of human desires to be noticed, respected, and interacted with. Furthermore the gamer controlling their avatar has motivations, emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Virtual item purchases are therefore likely to impact on a gamer's psychological wellbeing.

The virtual item industry across the globe is worth an estimated \$15 billion (Nayak, 2012). The growing market for virtual items indicates that transactions are becoming commonplace in gaming. Manninen and Kujanp (2007) suggest that an environment that humans interact within will develop humanistic economics, highlighting to those involved in the transactions that there is a real value attached to virtual items. The virtual market functions similarly to real markets in that there is demand, fluctuating markets, and profits to be made. The importance of virtual items to some people is illustrated by a divorce claim in which a wife made a claim for over half of her husband's virtual assets (Hyped Talk, 2010). In a different case, Qiu Chengwei, a middle-aged man killed a fellow gamer over a dispute involving a virtual item (Lee 2005). Obviously these cases are extreme but they highlight the fact that virtual items can have both financial and psychological value for gamers.

But why do people buy virtual items? Performance and general quality of an item is seen to be an important motivation whether the item is real or virtual (Lehdonvirta 2009). Online, an appeal to social status may be a better predictor for purchase behaviour than function (Li, 2012). However, some claim that appealing to social status has no motivational significance in purchase behaviour (Guo & Barnes 2011). Another unique element of buying virtual items is the potential exclusivity. Exclusive or limited items tend to be unattainable through gameplay and instead must be bought with money. Exclusivity online has been shown to be of importance, and segmentation is a technique used by the games producers that limits certain items to certain classes, levels, or races. This has been shown to stimulate purchase behaviour (Hamari & Lehdonvirta 2010). The amount of time invested in a game is also key to understanding spending patterns, and gamers will often buy virtual items after a dedicated amount of gameplay has been spent building an avatar (Kaburuan, Chen & Jeng, 2009). A further difference between the real and virtual is that in-game, a player is judged essentially on their material goods and the effectiveness of their items, where how hard they are to acquire becomes a measure of skill and achievement and impacts on the player's popularity (Lehdonvirta, Wilska & Johnson 2009). For example, a player with rarer items will likely have had to gain them through being good at the game. Though there could be different motivations for purchasing virtual items it is evident that a major ingredient to a successful multiplayer game is the enabling of social interaction (Griffiths, Hussain, Grüsser, et al., 2013).

Naturally, the longer the amounts of time that are spent online and in-game, the more the player emotionally and psychologically invests in the game (Griffiths, 2010). The concept of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1992) has been applied to gaming and can involve becoming emotionally attached to a character (Hull, Williams & Griffiths, 2013). Flow is the feeling of complete absorption in an activity and affects consciousness and emotions of the individual experiencing it. A key element of feeling 'flow' is the experience and perception of the world of the avatar and has been applied to electronic media (Witmer & Singer 1998). The adaptation of 'flow' to the virtual world suggests that just like other leisure activities, an individual investing time in an environment where they feel socially accepted can become emotionally attached to their avatar. Gaming has been shown to affect consciousness and emotions of gamers (Tay 2005) that are both necessary in experiencing 'flow'. It could be that purchasing of virtual items is also motivated – at least in part – by the feeling of emotional attachment to an avatar.

Gamers are being drawn in to an environment by the appeal of social interaction, manipulation of objects, exploration, and identification with the avatar (Griffiths et al., 2013; Witmer & Singer 1998). To some gamers, the virtual world can take on more significance than 'actual' life and residency in their preferred games is what they consider their actuality (Castranova & Wagner 2011; Pontes & Griffiths, 2014). This suggests that the reward of gaming is great, indicating that those individuals who buy virtual items are doing so because they feel involved in an environment that benefits them personally. The differentiation between the real and virtual raises questions about a person's identity. The issue of the true/ideal self has been explored by Kim, Lee and Kang (2012) who found that virtual items contributed to identification with the avatar and this identification reaped psychological benefits for gamers who might otherwise lack confidence. The 'ideal self' links to the avatar as an extension of the self. In the same way as choosing clothes for themselves, gamers may select virtual items such as weapons and vanity items (such as pets, mounts, and skin customisations) in order to portray their identity through their avatar. It could also be the case that an avatar is a medium to test an unrestrained side of one's personality that otherwise might not get noticed (Hussain & Griffiths, 2008). To date, there has been little research on why gamers buy virtual items. Huang (2012) reported that affective control, identity, involvement, cognitive involvement, flow, and communication with other players are major influences in purchasing virtual assets.

Given the lack of empirical research, the present qualitative study examined the (i) motivations for purchasing virtual items, (ii) psychological impact of purchasing virtual items on self-esteem and confidence, (iii) social benefits of gaming and virtual asset purchasing, (iv) emotional attachment to an avatar, (v) choice of items and customisation of the avatar as a form of self-expression, (vi) impulsivity versus thoughtfulness in purchase intentions of virtual items, and (vii) impact of transaction machinery on the 'game experience' from a gamer's perspective. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, the study was exploratory and aimed to understand the psychology underlying purchase intention of virtual items and assets among online gamers.

II. Method

a. Participants

The participants were recruited from the research team’s university gaming society. Participants volunteered to take part in the research after a talk given at a society meeting indicating that gamers from a multiplayer background where money can be spent for in-game items were required as part of research into 'virtual assets'. Prospective participants were notified that gamers of all genres were required including online strategy games, massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), and social media site games. To be included in the study, the gamers had to have spent money on virtual assets (irrespective of how much they spent buying virtual gaming item). A total of six gamers were interviewed (see Table 1 for socio-demographic details). A small sample was selected in order to keep with the ideographic nature of IPA (Smith 2004).

Participant	Sex and age	Preferred game(s) played
Participant 1	Male, 19	Battle Pirates
Participant 2	Male, 18	Guild Wars, World of Warcraft
Participant 3	Female, 21	World of Warcraft
Participant 4	Female, 21	World of Warcraft, League of Legends
Participant 5	Male, 22	World of Warcraft, Lord of the Rings Online, Farmville
Participant 6	Male, 29	Entropia, Diablo III, League of Legends, Guild Wars 2

Table 1. Summary of gamers’ socio-demographic characteristics

b. Research design and methodology

The present study utilized a qualitative methodology – in this case interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) – due to its focus on lived experience. IPA like many other qualitative methodologies provide much 'richer' data than that collected via quantitative surveys. IPA is a useful tool that has the potential to provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data collected. IPA allows participants to disclose thoughts on their experiences (Smith 2004). Participants were recruited using a variant of purposive sampling (Willig, 2001). Patton (2002) highlighted the importance of selecting participants based on their ability to provide rich data, making purposive sampling the most effective method of recruitment for an IPA study. In the present study, each participant had unique experiences of purchasing virtual items and assets, and IPA enabled each participant to share their thoughts with the researchers. Interpretative phenomenological *analysis* "offers an adaptable and accessible approach to phenomenological research intended to give a complete and in-depth account that privileges the individual" (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty & Hendry 2011, p.20).

Analysis of the interviews is carried out by initial familiarisation with the transcriptions of each interview. Any emerging themes are highlighted and brought together to establish superordinate themes. Superordinate themes are selected by the researchers depending on how salient they were deemed to be. Each superordinate theme contains a number of specific focus areas and these

are categorised as subordinate themes. It is possible for IPA to contribute to theory and understanding at a much more detailed level than quantitative approaches (Pringle et al. 2011) as the experiences are subjective. Each participant comes from a different background and has different experiences with virtual item and asset purchasing.

c. Procedure

All the gamers underwent a semi-structured interview. They were informed that the study aimed to explore the purchasing of 'virtual assets'. Each interview lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. Gamers were assured that all data were confidential and anonymous. Gamers were notified that if they felt uncomfortable with any questions that they did not need to answer and they could withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview up until a specified date. The gamers were notified that the interviews were being recorded for transcription purposes. The study was granted permission by the researchers' University Ethics Committee.

The analytic process was essentially idiographic where each case was analysed in its entirety before commonalities across the transcripts were extracted and retained as the essence of the experience of buying virtual assets. Each cluster of themes was provided with a super-ordinate descriptive title that accounted for the incumbent themes. Continuing the idiographic nature of the study, care was taken to interpret data and extract themes on a case-by-case basis initially. After each of the six transcripts had been independently analysed and reduced into hierarchical thematic structure, attempts were made to merge the thematic structure of each transcript into a more coherent, global model that maintained the essence of the phenomena being studied.

In order to maintain credibility of analysis, the interpretative process and the final model of super-ordinate and their sub-ordinate themes were audited by the second author (Smith, 2003). There was a dialogue with the second author who ultimately was satisfied with inductive reasoning and representation of data. Finally, the agreed hierarchical structure of themes was transformed into a narrative account, supported substantially with verbatim extracts. The inclusion of a substantial amount of verbatim accounts is important as it retains the voice of the participants while also providing an opportunity for the reader to critically appraise the interpretations made by the researcher (Newton, Larkin, Melhuish, & Wykes, 2007).

III. Results and preliminary discussion

Seven superordinate themes were identified as a result of interviewing the gamers: (i) *Motivation for purchase*, (ii) *Social aspects of the gaming and purchasing*, (iii) *Emotional attachment to the avatar*, (iv) *Psychological reward and impact*, (v) *Self-expression*, (vi) *'Stock market gaming' and gaming culture*, and (vii) *Research/impulse buying*. These are highlighted Subordinate themes have been identified and pooled.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes
Motivation for purchase	Necessity, exclusivity, function, commitment, impressed by/impressing others (social shopping), collectability/'cool factor'
Social aspects of gaming and purchasing	Real and lasting friendships, replacement for going out
Emotional attachment to avatar	Yes/no, pride, emotional enjoyment
Psychological reward/impact	Superiority, true/ideal self, self-torment, satisfaction, immersion
Self-expression	Role-play, extension of self, detached from avatar
'Stock market' gaming and gaming culture	Stock market gaming, ruining of game experience
Research/impulse buying	Recommendations, impulse buying, trying items on

Table 2. Summary of superordinate and subordinate themes regarding buying virtual assets (n=6)

a. Motivation for purchases

To a non-gamer, the motivation for purchase behaviours may seem simple – the item has a function and is superior to the current item that holds its place on the avatar. While function was a recurring theme for some of the gamers, there were more meaningful and unique motivations. These are expanded upon below.

Item exclusivity

Virtual items are not often thought of as degradable or 'limited' in any sense, as they are a result of programming code. However, when there is a time limit on the availability of items, the urgency to obtain the items increases. It was observed across most of the interviews that exclusive items with expiration were the items in which most money was spent by the gamer.

Extract 1: *"Because of Christmas they had this winter coat that made my character quite like a pimp, so I got these shades as well which made me look pretty cool"* (Participant 2)

Extract 2: *"It was mostly if it was limited edition and it was going to run out"* (Participant 3)

These extracts suggest that the fact the item is going to expire provokes the gamer in to purchase behaviour. This has been supported by research by Lehdonvirta, Wilska and Johnson (2009) who found in *Habbo Hotel* (an online life simulation), that the rarity of an item was indicative of its importance. In *Habbo Hotel* there is no in-game currency so items that were more exclusive became symbolic of success. However it must be considered that for the gamer, if an item can be obtained by working instead of purchasing, then the gamer is likely to spend time (as opposed to money) achieving it.

The influence of others (social shopping)

In an environment where the gamer is exposed to interaction with other players, the items themselves take on a meaning of expression and success. For most of the participants, the fact that someone else could see an item they had obtained was of significant importance. In a community where personality traits are not prevalent and a reliance on the observable is, items took on a social role. This has been termed 'social shopping' and has been explored by Hassouneh and Brengman (2011). They found that compared to psychological motivations for purchase behaviour online (e.g., self-esteem), social motivations were of equal importance (e.g., highlighting to other players that they are successful, or establishing a point of discussion). Hassouneh and Brengman's (2011) findings were supported by the present research.

Extract 3: "You see people with that stuff and think "oh wow, they look cool" and I want it as well and want that same first impression and social status so it's kind of copying because that's how they made you feel when you first saw them wearing that or showing their pet off and you think I want to have that effect on other people" (Participant 4)

Here, the term "social status" is used by Participant 4. The purchasing of virtual items for some gamers has potential to appeal to social status and increase the gamer's standing in the virtual world. To be impressed with another gamer's items is a feeling that makes an impression on some gamers, and that they may want to recreate.

Extract 4: "In World of Warcraft, one person had a mount and I asked them where they got it...a year later it went down to £10 and I thought I'd buy it because it still looked really good" (Participant 5)

Extract 4 is useful as it not only indicates that being impressed by another gamer's items is a key motivation for virtual item purchase behaviour, but it also highlights that seeing an item that stands out leaves a lasting impression which led to the purchase of the same item. An appeal to social status does not only apply to online friends. Participant 2 suggested that appealing to his friendships in real life was a motivation for buying certain items:

Extract 5: "We try and make each other's characters the blackest and with most outrageous hair but I didn't have very outrageous hair. I didn't have this so I felt a need to buy it so I could joke with him" (Participant 2)

The purchase of virtual items for Participant 2 served a purpose in a real social setting. Similarly to gamers influencing other gamers, he felt the necessity to buy hair for his avatar in order to make his friend laugh. Virtual items appeal to sociality, and social shopping leads to the possibility of more respect from other players or even the facilitating of a joke among real friends. It could perhaps be suggested that the research by Li (2012) and Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) in which social factors were shown to be the most influential purchase predictor are more consistent with the findings of the present study than Guo and Barnes (2011) who found social factors had little significance in purchasing behaviour.

Purchase behaviour as sign of commitment, predominant pastime

Typically, the longer the length of time spent on any hobby the more likely it is to lead to some sort of monetary investment. This is also true of gaming.

Extract 6: *"I played for seven years so that's, I kind of used that time frame as a reason as to why I could buy stuff for the game"* (Participant 4)

Justification for purchase behaviour was necessary for Participant 4. In order to buy items for their character, gamers have to have spent what they consider a justifiably large time investment. This investment can be considered to contribute to attachment of 'sentimental value' to virtual items, especially when spending real money on them.

Extract 7: *"It has a sentimental value more than the actual value. Especially if I'm buying it with real money it's got more sentimental value"* (Participant 5)

The spending of real money on items must be attributable to having considerable "sentimental value" attached to the game. This sentimental value then gets attributed to the items in which the gamer has spent a large amount of time to achieve. Compared to single-player games, multi-player games require much more time commitment online. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that each gamer had spent an average of 20 hours per week online – a considerably large time commitment. Gaming as a 'predominant pastime' was a recurring theme:

Extract 8: *"It's what I do in my spare time"* (Participant 1)

Extract 9: *"I'm playing about 2-3 hours a night. It can be anywhere up to 6 hours so quite a lot"* (Participant 5)

Gaming has evolved in to something more than a leisurely activity. The games offer an investment and the purchasing of virtual items is viewed as a justifiable time commitment. The items then appear to develop sentimental value. Therefore, it is expected that monetary investment will occur at a certain threshold over time. This is consistent with Kaburuan et al.'s (2009) finding that gamers will start purchasing behaviour once a dedicated amount of gameplay has been reached.

Function, Necessity to progress

Supportive of Lehdonvirta's (2009) findings that item quality is an important motivation for purchase behaviour, the present research also highlights the importance of function.

Extract 10: *"Functional things that can help me in the long-term, that's why I buy those things"* (Participant 5)

It seems logical that function is a key motivation. However, attached to the importance of function is the use of transactions as a necessity to progress in-game. Similar to buying items is the option to buy in-game currency in order to buy upgrades and items. It is up to the gaming companies to decide how exactly they capitalise on this, but to gamers it is expected that real money investment aids their progression through the game.

Extract 11: *"You do go in and you know what to expect, they've not got to that level by playing without 'coining' "* (Participant 1)

Here, Participant 1 terms the buying of gold as "coining", the game's nickname indicative of the acceptance of currency purchasing within the gaming environment. Although the gamers may clearly see companies nudging them towards spending money, necessity to progress and function remain motivations underlying purchase behaviour of virtual assets and is supportive of research findings by Lehdonvirta (2009).

Collectability/'Cool Factor'

Novel items can also be collected by gamers. Some examples of novel items (or 'vanity items') are collectible pets, mounts, clothing, and skin/hair customisations. The collectability or 'cool factor' also played a role as a motivation for buying virtual items among some of the gamers:

Extract 12: *"They were pet and mount collectors which is why they spent money, they wanted all of them"* (Participant 3)

For Participant 3's guild members, some items were classed as collectibles. In this case the items are 'vanity items' as they have no functional benefit for the avatar. Therefore, something aesthetic or virtually superficial proved to be a motivating factor in buying virtual items. This was also the case for Participant 6 who placed importance on items having the "cool factor".

Extract 13: *"I tend to go for things not because they will be make me better at the game but for the cool factor, not more efficient"* (Participant 6)

When considering motivations for virtual asset purchasing for gamers, function alone is not enough. There are more superficial features of the items that also appeal to social status. Exclusivity and collectability must also be considered, as well as (in some cases) "coining", viewed as an accepted necessity to progress in-game.

b. Social aspects of gaming and purchasing

When spending large amounts of time in an environment populated by other people, it is almost inevitable that the gamer is going to have to interact with some of them. Research by Tay (2005) highlighted the possibility of building friendships online, and was supported by findings in the present study. Gaming offered a medium for building enduring friendships and these are important when considering why gamers purchase virtual assets. Purchase behaviour could be a result of spending time in a socially rewarding environment. One participant no longer spends as much time in the game as they used to but still remains in contact with the friends she met through the game.

Extract 14: *"Since quitting I still talk to everyone so it's, we weren't just friends in game"* (Participant 3)

The online game was also a replacement for going out for some gamers. The social aspect offered by the game was as beneficial to the gamer socially as going out with friends. The game was more suited to some people socially than socialising in a real environment is (something that has also been reported in previous research [e.g., Cole & Griffiths, 2007; Griffiths et al., 2013]).

Extract 15: *"I'm able to jump straight out of the box online because in theory I'm hidden but viewed in a different way at the same time"* (Participant 4)

The 'barrier' of being behind a computer screen when interacting with others meant that for Participant 4, social interaction carried less threat and she could "jump straight out of the box" online. She had no need to hold back in social interactions online. This was evident in other gamers:

Extract 16: *"I feel I get more satisfaction and more enjoyment [playing online games] than going out drinking"* (Participant 1)

The alternative social aspect of the game was also important to these participants as they felt social satisfaction. The benefit for the gamers' social lives is an appeal of the games themselves. Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) suggested the environment and social aspects of the in-game world with things such as freedom from embarrassment and the absence of rude staff contribute to a more enjoyable shopping experience in the virtual world. 'Flow' in electronic media is reliant on the feeling of 'social presence' (Witmer & Singer 1998). Social presence is a result of social interactions and feeling emotional response to other gamer's actions. It could be that the feeling of immersion in the game and the resulting purchase behaviour could be due to the fulfilment of social needs enabled by the game.

c. Emotional attachment to avatar

Research has shown that it is possible for gamers to become emotionally attached to their items and avatar (Rab 2007). In terms of attachment in the present study, some gamers felt that they were attached to their avatar and items. When the gamer was attached, it was seen to influence feelings of pride and impact on the emotion of the gamer:

Extract 17: *"I have guild members who considered it a point of pride to have all these items"* (Participant 3)

Pride is one feeling attributed to emotional attachment to items. In Participant 3's case, the guild members placed more emphasis on obtaining certain items than she did, but the items did influence the positive feelings of attachment felt by her friends. Linked to the notion of pride is the emotional investment in the game.

Extract 18: *"If it's got a sappy ending I'm crying my eyes out but watch [the film] 'Titanic' and I'm cold hearted"* (Participant 4)

Here, Extract 18 summarises how encapsulating gaming is for Participant 4. The environment provides a medium in which she can *feel* her character's story and invest emotion into the development of her character. An interesting point to consider is that those gamers in the sample who considered themselves unattached to their avatar spent less money on virtual assets. One participant explicitly stated the necessity for emotional attachment in purchase behaviour:

Extract 19: *"I would have gone for that in a heartbeat because I put a lot of time in to that game and I was really attached to it. Attachment is definitely important in purchasing"* (Participant 6)

Attachment is important in the purchasing of virtual items as Extract 19 highlights. As previously mentioned, those who spent less money on virtual items were less attached to their avatar and those who were more attached to an avatar were more attached to the items and were likely to spend more. This is related to research by Bowman, Schultheiss, and Schumann (2012) who found that attachment to the game influenced pro-social or anti-social behaviour of their participants. Just like pro-social or anti-behaviour, purchase behaviour may also be influenced by emotional attachment. Participant 1 was a less serious spender and emphasis was placed on emotional attachment being important in his spending patterns.

Extract 20: "You do get a lot of people who get emotionally attached because of the money put on...Me personally, I wouldn't say I'm emotionally attached" (Participant 1)

This addresses how money spent on the game increases attachment for a gamer. Considering how emotional attachment can influence and be influenced by spending is supportive of the findings by Bowman et al. (2012).

d. Psychological reward and impact

Gamers mentioned feeling psychological reward as a result of purchasing virtual items Only one of the gamers mentioned feeling no satisfaction with their virtual item purchases. Item purchases impacted on the feelings of self-esteem as a result of being 'better' than other players. The motivation of superiority to other players is consistent with the 'reward' element of the 'Model of Desire' in purchase behaviour by Eyal (2012) in that the gamer is being rewarded for spending. The following extract highlights this feeling.

Extract 21: "If I feel good and I know that most other players don't have it, it makes me feel better about myself" (Participant 4)

Extract 21 exemplifies the reward of purchasing items. Psychological reward is evidently important in purchase intention and notions of the 'ideal self' and 'self-torment' were raised (see below).

Ideal self: For Participant 4, online gaming provided a medium to express her true self. Her real self was not the way she interacted and acted in real life, it was the way she interacted and acted through her avatar in-game. This has been explored by Hussain and Griffiths (2008) who suggested that simulated environments give people a chance to explore their personality and test boundaries which is hard to do offline. It has also been found that gamers wished to portray their 'ideal self' through 'Wishful Identification' (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005) where the user felt greater self-efficacy and satisfaction if their avatar had a vast range of powerful items (Kim et al. 2012). The present study supports this finding.

Extract 22: "You have this personality but you can't show your real self and true self in person and it's easier to be able to do it online" (Participant 4)

The importance of social interaction online has been discussed, but attention should be drawn to how important it is to some gamers. For Participant 4, expression of her true personality was the main motivation for gaming and virtual asset purchasing. She was able to portray what she felt her actual self was without real life limitations. The gaming world is a medium for this portrayal. She used the term "perfect" to describe her avatar:

Extract 23: "I always create myself with like massive elf ears and perfect skin, eyes, just the perfect look. I'm not going to be able to look like that in real life I might as well imagine myself, portray myself as looking like that in my own mind online" (Participant 4)

To be "perfect" online is a major motivation here. Self-expression and identity have been shown to be of major importance in purchasing of virtual assets (Lehdonvirta 2010). For Participant 4, it could be that expression of her ideal identity was a strong motivation for gaming and purchasing.

Self-torment

The lack of self-torment associated with shopping for items for an avatar meant that virtual shopping was more enjoyable than real world shopping for Participant 4. Shopping for her actual

self was associated with negative emotions such as disappointment, but when it came to shopping for avatar items this was not the case:

Extract 24: *"I torment myself with it. With clothes I try it on; I don't look good and just put it back. I don't have the same self-torment that I do with buying online items"* (Participant 4)

Here, self-torment linked to the psychological reward of buying items. There was more psychological reward from buying items online than in the real world. However, it must also be acknowledged that for some gamers there are differing levels of emotional attachment and although the gamer may have feelings of attachment, there is a decision as to whether the purchase can be justified. Taking in to account how they will feel after buying an item is important:

Extract 25: *"I always do the calculation, if it's a virtual asset it's always going to be a luxury purchase...Can I justify this to myself?"* (Participant 6)

Here, self-torment is associated with feelings of disappointment and justification, perhaps like real world shopping. A decision must be made over spending to acquire an item and the gamer must be able to justify spending. It appears that purchasing virtual items can have very real psychological benefits on self-esteem and confidence. The findings of the present study are also consistent with the 'reward' aspect in the 'Model of Desire' suggested by Eyal (2012).

e. Self-expression

Self-expression appears to have had significance as to why virtual items are purchased. Previous research has highlighted that self-expression occurs online through avatars (Kim et al. 2012). This was consistent with the findings from the interviews in the present study. One of the gamers was an actor, and role-playing motivated his buying of virtual items, creating a role for his character an extension of his desire to act:

Extract 26: *"It's like improvised acting within the game; you take on a role...rather than just playing a game and thinking in numbers you take on elements within with world and its history"* (Participant 2).

Virtual items can provide a means to creating character story and history. Creativity is a channel that can be opened in the online gaming world and virtual transactions are a possibility to further customise and express oneself through the avatar.

Extract 27: *"I like the creative side of creating my characters and I usually base my first character on me and what I believe my primary traits to be"* (Participant 2)

The avatar as an extension of the self was recurring theme among the interviews. However, Participant 5 felt the avatar was a detached entity from the gamer. In relation to success online, he expressed his mental detachment from other gamers and their avatars. Whilst he may know them in real life, he saw the avatar separately to the gamer:

Extract 28: *"When I play with my friends I don't interpret them as I do in real life, I interpret them as their avatar"* (Participant 5)

It could be argued that the avatar is therefore an opportunity to create a more successful self. There is a unique nature of self-expression online. One can at the same time express themselves through their character and act how their avatar would be expected to. There is no contradiction in this mentality. At the same time, it is possible to be oneself and someone more desirable as highlighted by Extract 29.

Extract 29: *"Anything I'd say was going through my head like 'is this something my character would say?'"*(Participant 6)

The purchasing of assets enables the gamer to customise their avatar in order to express themselves online. This supports the findings of Kim et al. (2012) who highlighted that it was necessary for gamers to identify with their avatar and this has potential to contribute to greater self-efficacy through 'wishful identification' (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005).

f. 'Stock market' gaming and gaming culture

The option to buy items had significant impact on the playing experience for the gamers in the sample. One gamer expressed his concern over the opportunistic nature of making money in-game and its resulting dominance over the enjoyment factor of playing due to having to spot the best times to buy and sell items. It has been observed by Garrelts (2009) that *"the economic systems in place also created several problems relating to "accumulated wealth and real estate," players creating characters solely for economic gain"* (p.1). This is something that some gamers voiced concern over:

Extract 30: *"It killed a lot of the fun aspect of it as everything was suddenly viewed as this financial transaction...I would look in the auction house for trends, buy low and sell high rather than actually playing the game itself"* (Participant 6)

Participant 6 felt that once the end of the game has been reached, the items became opportunities to make a profit rather than enjoying the game for its content:

Extract 31: *"There is always that looming button on the screen which is like 'hey, you know that new item you just got for your character, why don't you sell it?'"* (Participant 6)

Supportive of Garrelts (2009) claim that item markets can establish too much focus on transactions, the present research found the introduction of an official transaction system changed the *"game experience"*. Too much focus can be placed on knowing in-game markets. One gamer spoke about how games with immersive storylines are more enjoyable and engaging than *"stat bashing"* games. This has implications for how much impact an item can have on the gaming experience and this should be taken in to consideration by games developers who need to consider how much importance individual items have in-game. For researchers, it is important to consider the impact items have on gamers.

Extract 32: *"In Neverwinter Nights which is basically dungeons and dragons online I was playing a role...Whereas playing something like Diablo or World of Warcraft, no I don't really care. That's a batch of stats and killing potential"* (Participant 6)

Too much focus on the items themselves can lead to a devaluation of assets as gamers may be more inclined to spend on 'role' focussed games where having the best items holds less importance. Despite potentially affecting the gaming experience for players, virtual items can take

on a deeper meaning than coding within a framework. Games developers must consider this when creating transaction machinery for players to use.

g. Research and 'Impulse buying'

Buying items online can be seen as convenient as in the virtual world, transactions are only a couple of clicks away from completion. How the ease of conducting transaction impacts on gamers' decisions to purchase virtual items was therefore explored. Despite the ease of purchasing online, gamers were more guarded with spending because purchases were seen as a luxury and gamers were more cautious in an online environment where spending is potentially easier.

Extract 33: *"In an environment where impulse buying is very easy and quick I tend to be more guarded with what I buy"* (Participant 6)

Because of this, recommendations from friends were of major importance in purchase decisions. This supports the findings of Safferling and Lowen (2011) who found researching items before buying was commonplace, and the more researched an item was, the better price it got from the buyer. This also supports the findings of Huang (2012) who highlighted the role of communication with friends in the online world as a contributing factor to subsequent purchasing behaviour.

Extract 34: *"I asked him the best ways on getting an edge and trying to get this ship. I knew the answer would be to 'coin', for the repairs"* (Participant 1)

Extract 35: *"If I see something nice I ask them where they got it from"* (Participant 5)

Being able to research items is essential before making purchases of virtual assets. Related to this is the ability to preview items virtually (similar to a real-world changing room where the gamer can preview an item on their avatar). The availability of previewing meant that gamers were not impulsively buying their items – they were 'experiencing' the item before conducting a transaction.

Extract 36: *"You can preview how it would look on your character. For the items on Guild Wars that's all I really need, all the research I need"* (Participant 2)

Although Participant 2 did not rely heavily on recommendations from friends, he did prefer researching items. This came in the form of 'previewing' them in a virtual dressing room. It could be that virtual assets can be heavily researched, requiring recommendations and being more guarded in an online environment a result of the unique nature of virtual transactions. Communication with friends was found to be of importance in the present study supporting the findings by Huang (2012). However, recommendations alone may not be motivation enough, and previewing items may also be significant as highlighted by Extract 36.

IV. General Discussion

The present study explored psychological aspects of purchasing virtual items and assets. The use of Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) allowed each gamer to share their unique experience of playing and purchase behaviour. Despite the negative aspects of online gaming, the gamers in the present research emphasised a more positive side to buying virtual items and gaming more generally. As highlighted in the analysis, each gamer experienced their playing behaviour subjectively and such things as motivation for purchase behaviour and psychological impact of buying items hold different meanings for each individual.

The study highlighted many different motivations for purchasing virtual items. Lehdonvirta, Wilska and Johnson (2009) found item exclusivity contributed to an item's importance in-game. This was supported by the findings in the present study in that gamers were more likely to spend money if an item expired. Another key motivation for purchase behaviour is the appeal to social status. Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) found that items take on social roles. The 'social shopping' theory applies to the present findings as throughout the interviews there was the feeling of needing to impress other gamers. Attainment of items demonstrates to others how powerful the gamer is. It might be – in line with Li (2012) – that social motivations are integral for purchasing virtual items. Item function was also of importance in the present study.

Naturally, if an item has benefits for the avatar it is more likely that the gamer will spend money to obtain it (Lehdonvirta 2009). Function linked to progression, purchasing items, and buying in-game currency are all sometimes a necessity to progress. Novelty and collectability were also important motivators for some of the gamers. Combining the findings of the current study and previous research demonstrates that there is a wide range of motivations and each individual will place different levels of importance on certain factors such as exclusivity, function, or social status. Despite subjective motivations, purchasing virtual items arose out of gaming as a predominant pastime. All of the gamers in the sample were dedicated gamers who spent relatively large amounts of time online and as perhaps expected larger gaming commitment to led to purchase behaviour (Kaburuan et al. 2009).

An integral part of multiplayer gaming is the interaction with other gamers. The feeling of 'social presence' in an online environment is reliant on an emotional response to social interaction (Witmer & Singer 1998), and the gamers in the present sample felt social satisfaction. The game sometimes enabled social interaction that might not otherwise be present. This supports the theory suggested by Tay (2005) that gaming enables the building of new friendships. Virtual assets can play a number of roles in facilitating friendships such as enabling the gamer to make their character unique. Hassouneh and Brengman (2011) also pointed out that the shopping environment is more enjoyable online as it removes embarrassment and rude staff. The real social benefits of purchase behaviour should not be underestimated. The virtual world can remove normal social taboos and potentially acts as a social buffer between gamers.

Previous research by Bowman et al. (2012) has shown how emotional attachment to games affects behaviour. This also applies to the present study. Similar to the findings by Bowman et al. (2012), the present study highlighted the role of emotional attachment to an avatar as a predictor for purchase intention. As well as emotional attachment increasing likelihood of spending, the spending of real money on items increases the attachment felt. It could be that purchasing virtual items may be a cyclical behaviour. It is also the case that purchasing affects the cognitions and emotions of gamers – 'pride' was a feeling that resonated in the present study. Emotional attachment to items and characters may be commonplace among gamers. Future research should further investigate feelings of emotional attachment in a virtual world.

Virtual worlds offer gamers the chance to feel psychological reward and elevated self-esteem. Eyal's 'Model of Desire' (2012) can be applied to the present research as many of the interviewees spoke of feelings of superiority. The 'reward' element of the 'Model of Desire' is that the gamer is rewarded for spending as they become more powerful with better items. The feeling of superiority over other gamers enhances self-esteem. The present study also demonstrated notions of the 'ideal self' and self-torment. 'Wishful identification' (Hoffner & Buchanan 2005) leads to gamers portraying their 'ideal self' through an avatar and a wide range of powerful items can lead to greater self-efficacy and satisfaction (Kim et al. 2012). Therefore it could be argued that gaming

and virtual asset purchasing has real psychological benefits for gamers and as suggested by Hussain and Griffiths (2008), simulated environments may be an opportunity for people to explore their personality and test boundaries.

The acquisition of virtual assets enables more detailed role-playing and self-expression. Self-expression has been shown to occur online through avatars (Kim et al. 2012) and buying items has the potential to further customise a character. Self-expression can be related to feelings of psychological reward as gamers are able to portray their selves in a manner that they may not be able to in real life (Hussain & Griffiths 2008). It may also be possible to apply 'Wishful Identification' to self-expression. Kim et al. (2012) highlighted that it was necessary for gamers to identify with their avatar and this has potential to contribute to greater self-efficacy. Virtual assets potentially allow the gamer to explore their creative side through their avatar. The fact that gamers may consider their avatar as personal is indicative of the psychological impact games and virtual transactions can have.

Financial transactions can be easier to conduct in an online environment and the present study took this in to consideration. Supportive of Safferling and Lowen's (2011) findings, the present study highlights how gamers research items before purchasing them. It might be expected that easy-to-use transaction machinery might facilitate spending. However, in reality, gamers were guarded with their spending online and recommendations from friends played a major role in purchase behaviour. This is supported by Huang (2012) who found communication with friends was a predictor for purchasing behaviour. Recommendations alone may not be enough of a predictor and previewing how items look on an avatar was also of importance. Virtual assets can be then researched and the placing of real monetary value on the virtual items indicates the value they may hold to the gamer.

Limitations and future research

The present study is not without limitations. The sample was small (although perfectly adequate for IPA). The sample was also self-selecting and the gamers that participated are unlikely to be representative of all gamers that make in-game purchases. The data were all self-report and are therefore subject to various biases (social desirability biases, recall biases, etc.). Replication using larger samples and other methodologies are therefore needed.

Despite the limitations, the present study was an exploratory study into a relatively new research area. Although video gaming in itself has been studied in depth, transactions for virtual assets have arisen from technological advancement. The present study focussed on the psychological motivations and impact of transactions for virtual items, and future research could study more one or two of the themes analysed in the present paper in more depth. This would develop a greater understanding of the research area and contribute to understanding the underlying psychology and motivation behind gaming and asset purchasing. With a more specific research question in mind future studies may want to employ a different analytical approach. IPA was chosen in order to gain an understanding of the subjective experiences of gamers 'lived experience'. Future studies may want to employ different analytical methodology in order to establish a wider understanding of virtual transactions in gaming. A large proportion of online gamers are younger than eighteen years old and are less financially independent. Problematic spending may be more prevalent in a younger cohort. Future research should take this in to account.

Implications

The findings of the present study have implications both for game developers and gamers. Game developers looking to incorporate transaction machinery into their games must consider things from the gamer's perspective as too much focus on purchasing items may affect the gaming experience. For gamers, appealing to social status and wanting to gain rewards, 'flow' can be applied to item purchasing (Witmer & Singer 1998, Csikszentmihalyi 1992). The feeling of immersion in-game may stimulate purchase behaviour. Despite the emphasis on the 'positive' in the present study gamers must be aware that feelings of immersion could potentially lead to problem behaviour such as addiction or excessive spending on virtual items (Pontes & Griffiths, 2014).

In the present study, characteristics of the items themselves such as exclusivity and function influenced spending.. The fact that gamers develop emotional attachment to avatars and may use these as self-expression is also something games developers should consider. Whether placing more emphasis on the 'game experience' or generating a profit should affect how item transactions are used in-game. Game developers should also consider that black markets for items exist already (Garrelts 2009) and that introducing an official transaction system could improve the game experience. One certainty is that transactions for virtual assets are becoming integral to online gaming.

Conclusion: The present study aimed to explore the phenomenon of buying virtual items. Motivations for purchase behaviour, the social and psychological benefits of purchase behaviour, emotional attachment to an avatar and items, self-expression through the character, how the transaction machinery impacts on the game experience, and how research contributes to purchase behaviour have all been considered in this study. Unlike media coverage focussing on the more negative impact of online gaming, the present study highlighted the positive aspects of purchasing virtual assets for the gamer. They are able to feel connected socially, feel confidence in themselves and their success, express their inner and ideal self without constraint or fear, build lasting relationships, impress people, and generally benefit from gaming and buying virtual items.

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Blokify: Juego de modelado e impresión 3D en tableta digital para el aprendizaje de vistas normalizadas y perspectiva

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Resumen

En este artículo se analiza el uso del juego Blokify para introducir al alumnado en las competencias que relacionan las figuras tridimensionales con su representación bidimensional mediante las vistas normalizadas y la perspectiva. Estos contenidos se estudian en asignaturas de dibujo a partir de secundaria y Bachillerato.

Blokify es un juego gratuito para tabletas digitales que permite modelar figuras tridimensionales de forma similar al popular video juego Minecraft: "bloque a bloque". Las figuras modeladas con Blokify se pueden imprimir en 3D de manera casi directa. Existen informes internacionales que valoran la potencialidad de los videojuegos como recurso educativo y las Tablet Digital y la Impresión 3D como tecnologías con repercusión en la enseñanza.

En este artículo se detalla la experiencia realizada en el curso 2013-2014 con grupos de Educación Primaria (3º y 5º) y un grupo de 4º ESO. La actividad se llevó a cabo en el centro concertado Colegio Nuryana de San Cristóbal de La Laguna y participaron un total de 70 alumnos. La experiencia llevada a cabo con alumnos de primaria permite ver que con estas nuevas estrategias de aprendizaje, contenidos del curriculum de secundaria, podría empezar a estudiarse en cursos de primaria.

Palabras clave

Aplicaciones, tabletas digitales, Impresión 3D, modelado 3D, educación, juegos, Vistas normalizadas.

Blokify: Game for 3D modeling and printing for digital tablet to learn standard views and perspective

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Abstract

In this article we analyze the use of the game Blokify to introduce students to the competencies that relates three-dimensional figures with their bidimensional representation by the standard views and perspective. These contents are studied in technical drawing from secondary and high schools.

Blokify is a free game for digital tablets that allows modeling tridimensional figures similar to the popular video game Minecraft "block to block". Figures modeled with Blokify can be printed in 3D almost directly. There are international reports who value the potential of videogames as an educational resource and Digital Tablets and 3D printing impact technologies in teaching.

In this article we describe the experience made in the course of 2013-2014 with groups of primary school (3rd and 5th) and a group of 4th ESO. The event took place at the concerted center Nuryana of San Cristóbal of La Laguna and involved a total of 70 students. The experiment conducted with elementary students demonstrates that with these new learning strategies, content of secondary curriculum could begin studied in primary grades.

Keywords

Applications, digital tablets, 3D Printing, 3D modeling, education, games, standardized Views.

I. Introducción

Existen diferentes informes internacionales sobre la educación en el siglo XXI (UNESCO, 2015; Institute of international education, 2014; OECD, 2014). Entre dichos informes existe uno específico sobre tecnologías en educación que se ha convertido en un referente: el "Informe Horizon". Dicho informe está elaborado desde 2004 por la New Media Consortium's (<http://www.nmc.org/>) e identifica seis nuevos tipos de tecnologías que podrán ser de uso generalizado en la educación, analizando el impacto que se prevé en la enseñanza, el aprendizaje, la investigación y la expresión creativa. Desde el año 2009, se realizan dos informes, uno para enseñanza preuniversitaria (K-12) y otro para enseñanza universitaria. En 2014, se incorpora la realización de un tercer informe específico para la enseñanza preuniversitaria en Europa.

Desde 2010, se incluye en los distintos Informes Horizon, una corriente de aprendizaje basado en juegos. Dicha corriente de aprendizaje, en los últimos años se ha denominado con diferentes términos como por ejemplo ludificación, game based learning (GBL), gamificación, etc. (Lee, Hammer, 2011; Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, Nacke, 2011; Kapp 2012). En los informes Horizon en los últimos dos años ha terminado por designarse como Gamificación. Esta tendencia educativa trata de potenciar la motivación, la concentración, el esfuerzo y otros valores comunes a todos los juegos para influir y motivar a los alumnos. Estas estrategias basadas en juegos responden a una realidad en la que los niños con 2 y 3 años de edad comienzan a utilizar los dispositivos móviles como tabletas y smartphones de sus padres para entretenerse con los juegos. El 52,5% de los menores de 11 a 14 años de edad juega habitualmente con sus dispositivos móviles y el 35,5% lo hace en alguna ocasión (Cánovas, García de Pablo, Oliaga San Atilano, & Aboy Ferrer, 2014).

Por otra parte, en 2013, el Informe Horizon (Horizon, 2013) indica que las tabletas digitales y las impresoras 3D son tecnologías que tendrán impacto en la educación en los próximos cinco años. Además, el Informe Horizon 2014 (Horizon, 2014) incorpora una tendencia significativa denominada "BYOD" (Bring Your Own Device), que consiste en permitir o promocionar que los estudiantes utilicen en el aula sus propios dispositivos (smatphones, tabletas digitales o ultrabooks), que junto con la cantidad de aplicaciones educativas gratuitas disponibles, hace que esta sea una alternativa viable para la digitalización del aula.

Las tabletas digitales y dispositivos móviles son usados por el 30% de los niños españoles de 10 años de edad. A los 12 años, casi el 70% dispone ya de este tipo de tecnología, y a los 14 años el 83% (Cánovas, García de Pablo, Oliaga San Atilano, & Aboy Ferrer, 2014). Uno de los estudios más extensos sobre tabletas "The iPad as a tool for education: a case study" (Heinrich, 2012) demuestra el impacto significativo y muy positivo en la enseñanza y en el aprendizaje de los alumnos. Las tabletas digitales, debido a su portabilidad y su autonomía, permiten convertir cualquier aula en un espacio digital, eliminando la problemática asociada a las aulas de ordenadores.

Las impresoras 3D, son máquinas que, a partir de ficheros digitales, permiten generar objetos mediante adición de material utilizando para ello diferentes tecnologías (plástico fundido, resina fotosensible, etc.). A esta tecnología se la conoce también como prototipado rápido (Canessa, Fonda, & Zennaro, 2013). El abaratamiento de esta tecnología en los últimos años permite pensar en su uso para contextos educativos.

Uno de los contenidos curriculares de educación secundaria se centra en la relación entre las figuras tridimensionales y su representación bidimensional mediante las vistas normalizadas y la perspectiva. Este contenido suele representar una dificultad importante para los alumnos porque necesita un alto grado de abstracción. Debido a esto, se pretende utilizar un juego como Blokify para mejorar su aprendizaje. Por otro lado, y puesto que es un juego muy sencillo e intuitivo, se decide comprobar si los alumnos de educación primaria serían capaces de realizar los mismos ejercicios que estaban pensados para secundaria.

II. Antecedentes

a. Videojuegos en educación

El uso de los videojuegos con fines educativos lleva investigándose desde hace tres décadas. En 1978, G. Ball publicó el artículo "Telegames Teach More Than You Think" (Ball, 1978) en el que estableció cuatro áreas para la evaluación de los videojuegos como medios didácticos: el desarrollo instructivo de los videojuegos, el desarrollo de habilidades por parte de los videojuegos, el diseño de los videojuegos y su capacidad de adaptabilidad y flexibilidad. Uno de los estudios sobre el potencial instructivo de los juegos, realizado por B. Lowery y F. Knirk (Lowery & Knirk, 1982-83), más concretamente sobre los videojuegos, destaca la mejora en habilidades espaciales y el beneficio de la simulación tridimensional, aspecto también fundamental de la visualización espacial. En España, en la Universidad de la Laguna, existe una experiencia que utiliza el videojuego Tetris como herramienta educativa para la mejora de la visión espacial (Saorín, Martín Gutiérrez, Martín Dorta, & Contero, 2009).

En 1984 S. Long y W. Long (Long & W.H. Long, 1984) defiende los principios del aprendizaje motivador que subyacen en los videojuegos: el desafío, la fantasía y la curiosidad. Poco después, S. Silvern (Silvern, 1985-86) publicó un artículo titulado "Classroom Use of Video Games" en el que, de igual modo, defendió todo aquello que los videojuegos pueden ofrecer en términos de experiencias educativas útiles.

En 1998 se publica el libro "Jugando con Videojuegos: educación y entretenimiento" (Gros, B, 1998), acerca de la experiencia en la utilización de videojuegos en el aula. La publicación de 2004 "Pantallas, juegos y educación: la alfabetización digital en la escuela" (Gros, B, 2004), es la construcción de bases sólidas para la integración de las TIC (tecnologías de la información y la comunicación) en la educación. En 2011, el Instituto de Tecnologías Educativas del Departamento de Proyectos Europeos, publica el proyecto "Imagine: Juegos digitales para el aprendizaje" (Educativas, 2011). Su objetivo es aumentar la experimentación del aprendizaje basado en juegos y la integración de éste en las enseñanzas generales del sistema educativo.

Un videojuego con el mismo funcionamiento que Blockify es Minecraft, que permite construir en 3D con bloques, en un entorno de juego donde los participantes disponen de una gran libertad de elección y exploración. (Gértrudix Barrio & Gértrudix Barrio, 2013). Es un videojuego con más de 54 millones de unidades vendidas (Castrillón, 2014). Existe una versión específica para educación (www.minecraftedu.com). Minecraft ha sido evaluado como recurso didáctico en distintos campos, como por ejemplo los relativos a edificios históricos, el fomento de la creatividad o el interés por el descubrimiento (Sáez López & Domínguez Garrido, 2014) entre otros.

En septiembre de 2012, Mojang comenzó el proyecto solidario "Block by Block" (www.blockbyblock.org) en cooperación con la ONU para crear y diseñar entornos del mundo real en Minecraft. El proyecto permite a los jóvenes que viven en zonas deprimidas, diseñar con Minecraft los cambios que les gustaría ver y a participar en su planificación urbana, modificando su propio vecindario. Este videojuego tiene posibilidad de imprimir sus diseños y construcciones en una impresora 3D.

b. Modelado 3D en educación

El modelado y la impresión 3D hasta hace aproximadamente ocho años eran tecnologías reservadas para expertos en la materia y requerían un largo y costoso aprendizaje, además se precisaba un equipo técnico avanzado y el precio de los programas era muy elevado y sólo accesible para grandes centros, empresas o universidades (Caño, de la Cruz, & Solano, 2007). Este panorama cambia en 2006, con la distribución de forma gratuita del programa SketchUp por parte de Google. Sketchup es un programa multiplataforma (PC y Mac) con una versión gratuita, que nos ofrece la posibilidad de introducirnos en el Modelado 3D con pocos conocimientos y en muy poco tiempo. Dispone de una interfaz amigable, con un reducido número de órdenes intuitivas que permite un rápido aprendizaje. Debido a estas características, este programa se ha utilizado en entornos educativos en materias relacionadas con el dibujo y para la mejora de la visión espacial (de la Torre Cantero J., Saorín, Carbonell, Del Castillo Cossío, & Contero, 2012).

Otras empresas que desarrollan software de modelado tridimensional están empezando a desarrollar programas con esta nueva manera de entender el modelado 3D, accesible al gran público y no exclusivamente para expertos. Un significativo ejemplo, es la suite 123D desarrollada por Autodesk. Esta suite es un conjunto de cinco aplicaciones gratuitas, multidispositivo, multiplataforma y muy sencillas de aprender a utilizar. Cada una de ellas sirve para un tipo de modelado 3D específico, por un lado más geométrico como 123D Design o más orgánico como 123D Creature. Además, todas las aplicaciones cuentan con la posibilidad de imprimir los diseños en una impresora 3D y todas tienen una versión desarrollada para tabletas digitales.

c. Tabletás digitales

Las primeras tabletas digitales surgieron en el año 93, llamadas Apple Message Pad, más conocido como Newton. El modelo nunca llegó a tener éxito, pero sin embargo el desarrollo del software se utilizó por la industria de la electrónica para crear un nuevo aparato electrónico denominado Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). En el año 2001 Microsoft presenta diversos prototipos de Tablet's Pc, pero el funcionamiento y la experiencia de uso de estos dispositivos no logró convencer a la mayoría de los usuarios. Sin embargo, esta iniciativa de Microsoft popularizó el término Tablet PC y sentó las bases de la corriente actual de tabletas digitales. La empresa Apple lanzó en 2010 la primera tableta digital realmente operativa, el iPad, que aprovechaba la experiencia de la empresa con los dispositivos móviles táctiles que ya tenía en el mercado (el iPhone, el iPod Touch). Desde su aparición, las tabletas digitales, debido a su pantalla táctil, han sido utilizadas como dispositivo para dibujar (Saorín Pérez, de la Torre Cantero, Martín Dorta, Carbonell Carrera, & Contero González, 2011).

d. Impresoras 3D y educación

Respecto a la tecnología de la impresión 3D, se empezó a utilizar en los años setenta y desde su aparición las universidades han tratado de utilizarlas como complemento a su docencia. Desde hace años, el prototipado rápido es un tema habitual en los cursos y en los libros de expresión gráfica dirigidos a estudiantes universitarios. Pero uno de los grandes factores que limitó el uso de esta tecnología en las aulas era el precio. En el año 2000 una máquina de prototipado rápido tenía un precio que oscilaba entre 10.000 y 100.000 dólares por lo que sólo los grandes centros podían permitirse el lujo de tener una (Viki, y otros, s.f.).

Sin embargo, en el año 2005 se crea el proyecto RepRap con el objetivo de abaratar los costes asociados a la impresión 3D. Esta iniciativa dio lugar a la popularización de dichas máquinas, ya que los costes asociadas a fabricar una de ellas eran del orden de los 1000 dólares. Uno de los fundadores del proyecto RepRap, Zach Smith, fundó en 2009 la empresa MakerBot cuyo objetivo era vender kits de impresoras 3D para que todo el mundo pudiera montarse su propia impresora por menos de 1000 dólares. A partir de ese momento, las impresoras de bajo coste se han popularizado y ha surgido una industria alrededor de ellas. La aparición de esta nueva gama de impresoras permite a la mayoría de los centros educativos disponer de una de ellas y utilizarla en su docencia. Por lo tanto, una vez superado la barrera del precio, es necesario disponer de metodologías y recursos docentes que nos permitan sacar partido de las impresoras 3D en entornos educativos (Canessa, Fonda & Zennaro, 2013).

III. Blokify y su relación con las visitas normalizadas

Blokify es un juego, gratuito, disponible para tabletas iPad que permite construir figuras mediante el uso de bloques en forma de cubos. Es un juego de tipo sandbox (es decir que no hay que cumplir ningún objetivo y que el jugador puede crear con libertad), de interfaz muy sencilla e intuitiva, muy parecido a Minecraft. Dispone únicamente de dos funciones de construcción, una es colocar bloques y la otra eliminarlos. La interfaz del juego es tipo tablero de ajedrez y cuenta con un entorno adaptado para los niños. Prácticamente no es necesario un aprendizaje, dado que solo se necesitan las instrucciones básicas de cómo rotar el espacio y moverse en el entorno de modelado tridimensional (Figura 1). Además la aplicación cuenta con la posibilidad de imprimir en 3D los modelos diseñados.



Figura 1: interfaz de la aplicación Blokify

Blokify ayuda a entender de manera directa y lúdica la relación entre los modelos tridimensionales y su representación bidimensional mediante vistas normalizadas y perspectivas. Además, debido a que su manera de diseñar es muy parecida a la del videojuego minecraft, muy popular entre niños y jóvenes, permite disminuir al máximo la necesidad de formación para la utilización del mismo.

La enseñanza de las vistas normalizadas (planta, alzado y perfil) forma parte del curriculum de secundaria en la asignatura Educación Plástica y Visual y en Tecnología, siendo una parte importante de la asignatura de Dibujo Técnico que se estudia en Bachillerato. Para el estudio de las vistas normalizadas y los objetos en perspectiva, tradicionalmente, se realizan ejercicios sobre papel (Figura 2) que incluye dibujos en los que los alumnos deben identificar las figuras y saber obtener las vistas normalizadas. O al revés, representar la perspectiva a partir de las tres vistas. La interpretación de los gráficos es compleja y requiere conocimientos específicos y habilidades espaciales (M.Diezmann & Lowrie, 2009).

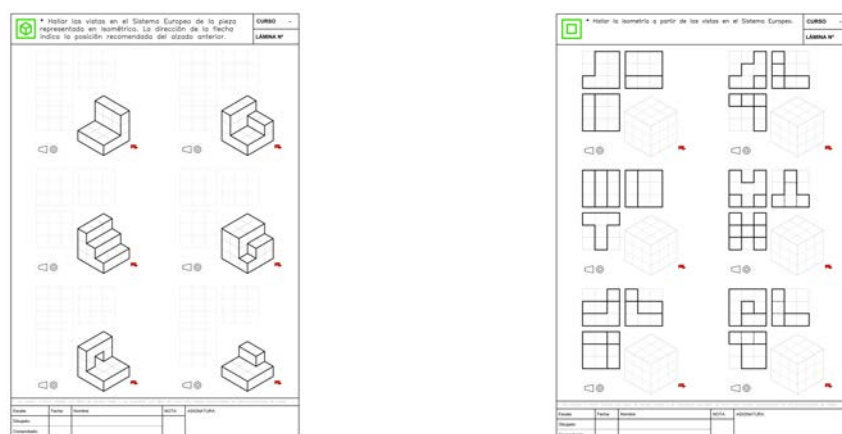


Figura 2: Ejercicios tradicionales de Perspectivas y vistas normalizadas

El desarrollo de las habilidades espaciales es un objetivo presente en los currículos a partir de la educación secundaria. Incluye las relaciones espaciales y la percepción, visión y rotación espacial (Sjölander, s.f.). En la educación primaria estos objetivos están relacionados con el espacio físico que rodea al niño (Holloway, 1982).

Está demostrado que las habilidades espaciales se desarrollan mediante entrenamiento (de la Torre Cantero J., Saorín, Carbonell, Del Castillo Cossío, & Contero, 2012), y se relaciona el dominio de las vistas normalizadas con la elección de carreras más técnicas (Wai, Lubinski, & Benbo, 2009). Estas carreras, agrupadas bajo las siglas STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), que hace referencia a los estudios de ciencia, tecnología, ingeniería y matemáticas. En 2011, los organismos estadounidenses del United States National Research Council y la National Science Foundation, consideraron a las disciplinas STEM como fundamentales para las sociedades tecnológicamente avanzadas e importantes para el desarrollo económico futuro (Brown, DeVillez, & Luczak, 2013). En Europa, la red educativa European Schoolnet (que agrupa a 31 Ministerios de Educación europeos) dispone en su portal web de tres áreas principales de interés: Innovación Educativa, Seguridad en la Red y estudios STEM. En este portal, se resalta que las habilidades en ciencia, tecnología, ingeniería y matemáticas (STEM) se están convirtiendo en una parte cada vez

más importante de la alfabetización básica en la economía del conocimiento (<http://www.eun.org/focus-areas/stem>).

IV. Descripción de la propuesta educativa

Para la realización de la actividad, se utilizan ejercicios impresos con la representación de formas 3D y de vistas normalizadas. Los ejercicios forman parte de un taller de modelado 3D disponible en el portal Anfore 3D (www.anfore3d.com) que ha sido validado en diversos estudios y niveles educativos (De La Torre Cantero, 2013). Dadas las características para construir modelos 3D de Blokify, las figuras elegidas como enunciado se pueden construir por apilado de cubos. La tarea que se les propondrá a los alumnos es que realicen el mayor número de piezas posibles en el tiempo de una clase lectiva. Se realizan primero figuras con Blokify de los ejercicios a partir de la perspectiva y después a partir de las vistas normalizadas (Figura 3).

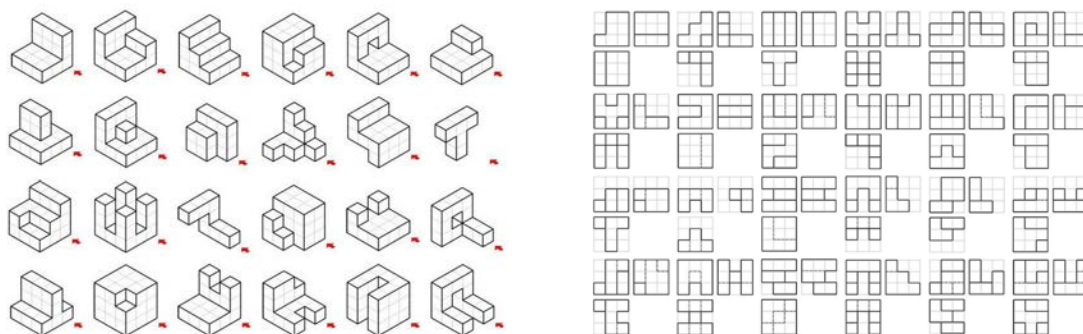


Figura 3: Ejercicios de Perspectivas y vistas normalizadas

Todas las creaciones que se realicen con la aplicación Blokify se podrán imprimir con una impresora 3D (Figura 4), posibilitando así a los alumnos entender la relación entre los objetos 3D y su representación bidimensional. Usando las diferentes maneras de ver o percibir el objeto, se contribuye a la mejora de la visión espacial de los niños (Holloway, 1982).

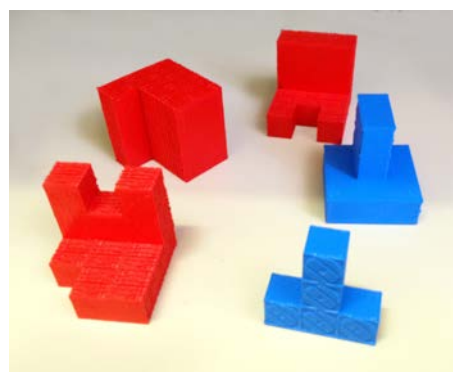
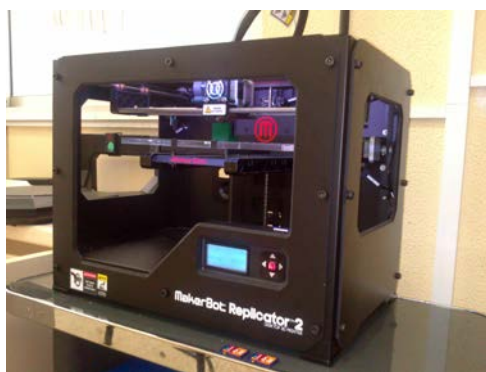


Figura 4: Figuras impresas con una impresora 3D

Por lo tanto, con esta actividad los alumnos juegan con las mismas piezas pero en 4 formatos diferentes (Figura 5).

1. Dibujada sobre papel, interpretando la tridimensionalidad del objeto.
2. Dibujado sobre papel las 3 vistas de un objeto.
3. Modelado en un programa 3D con construcción a base de bloques y posibilidad de rotar el objeto en el espacio.
4. Impresión 3D del objeto diseñado. Teniendo la posibilidad de tocar un objeto físico.

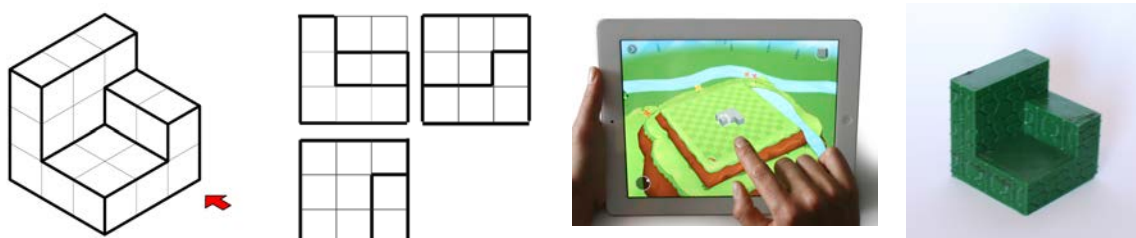


Figura 5: Diferentes formatos del mismo ejercicio

V. Descripción de la experiencia educativa

La actividad se realizó en el Colegio Nuryana de San Cristóbal de La Laguna el día 22 de abril de 2014. Se trata de un centro concertado cuya oferta educativa va desde educación infantil hasta 2º de Bachillerato. En la actividad participaron un total de 70 alumnos en tres sesiones distintas con un grupo de 4º ESO y dos grupos de Educación Primaria (3º y 5º). 28 alumnos de 3º de primaria (8-9 años), 26 alumnos de 5º de primaria (10-11 años) y 16 alumnos de 4º de la ESO (15-16 años).

Antes de comenzar la actividad, se realizó una breve encuesta a los alumnos para determinar el uso de dispositivos digitales durante su vida cotidiana, con la idea de ver si los alumnos estaban familiarizados con los medios digitales (Tabla 1). En dicha tabla se puede observar como la mayoría de los estudiantes dispone de ordenadores en un porcentaje cercano al 100% independientemente del nivel educativo. Sin embargo el uso de tabletas aumenta en los niveles inferiores, al igual que ocurre con el hecho de que conozcan el videojuego Minecraft.

CURSO	4º ESO	5º Primaria	3º Primaria
Total de alumnos	16	26	28
Número de alumnos que tiene tabletas digitales en su hogar	9 (56 %)	24 (92 %)	26 (92 %)
Número de estudiantes con ordenador portátil en casa	15 (93 %)	25 (96 %)	26 (92 %)
Número de alumnos con ordenador de mesa	16 (100 %)	25 (96 %)	28 (100 %)
Número de alumnos que habían jugado al videojuego Minecraft	4 (25 %)	11 (42 %)	18 (64 %)

Tabla 1: Caracterización de los participantes

La actividad se desarrolló durante tres sesiones de 50 minutos cada una. Se trabajó en grupos de 2 ó 3 alumnos, a cada grupo se le entregó una tableta y dos hojas con ejercicios de perspectivas y vistas normalizadas (Figura 6). La actividad consistía en construir primero 10 piezas dibujadas en perspectiva con la aplicación Blokify.



Figura 6: Alumnos realizando el ejercicio e impresora 3D

Una vez los grupos conseguían construir las 10 piezas con blokify a partir de una perspectiva dibujada, pasaban al siguiente nivel, en el cual se aumentaba el grado de dificultad pues los alumnos debían realizar las piezas teniendo como datos tres vistas de la figura (Alzado, Planta y Perfil Izquierdo).

A medida los alumnos iban obteniendo piezas, una de las posibilidades que ofrece Blokify es la de generar el archivo “.stl” para poder imprimir los modelos en una impresora 3D. Durante el taller, los tres primeros grupos en terminar una de las piezas tenían la posibilidad de generar el modelo en plástico en una impresora 3D (esta limitación es debida a que cada pieza tarda alrededor de 15 minutos en imprimirse). Al finalizar la experiencia se les pasó a los participantes una encuesta de satisfacción sobre la misma (Tabla 2). Para analizar la consistencia del cuestionario se ha realizado un alfa de Cronbach.

Pregunta	
1	Blokify es una aplicación sencilla de utilizar.
2	¿Piensas que es más sencillo realizar las figuras en Blokify que en el papel?
3	La actividad contribuye a mejorar la visión espacial.
4	¿Crees que es acertada la orientación educativa de la aplicación Blokify?
5	La incorporación de tabletas al aula es estimulante para los alumnos.
6	Me gustaría que se incorporaran más actividades de este estilo al temario de la asignatura.
7	Ha sido sencillo realizar la actividad siguiendo las instrucciones recibidas.
8	Prefiero trabajar con tabletas que hacerlo usando reglas, lápiz y papel.
9	El uso de impresoras 3D en el aula, incrementa la motivación de los alumnos debido a la posibilidad de ver su proyecto terminado.
10	Usar una impresora 3D es fácil y viable en un aula.

Tabla 2: Resultados encuesta de satisfacción

VI. Resultados

Después de la experiencia se contabilizó el número de ejercicios resueltos, diferenciando los tres niveles en los que se hizo la prueba. Los resultados se pueden ver en la Figura 7.

Los alumnos de 4º ESO fueron capaces de completar todos los ejercicios a partir de la perspectiva, y la mayoría consiguió resolver más de cinco piezas a partir de las vistas normalizadas. Estos alumnos llevan dos años en la asignatura de Dibujo Técnico y ya tienen los conocimientos básicos sobre las perspectivas y las vistas normalizadas.

Los alumnos de 5º de Primaria desconocían el Dibujo Técnico y conceptos como la visión espacial. Por otro lado, la mayoría estaba familiarizada con el videojuego Minecraft y se manejaban con bastante soltura con la tableta digital y la aplicación Blokify. Fueron capaces de terminar al 90% los ejercicios a partir de la perspectiva y también realizaron al menos dos piezas del siguiente nivel.

Finalmente, los alumnos de 3º de Primaria obtuvieron resultados un poco inferiores respecto del grupo anterior. Del total de nueve grupos, tres consiguieron realizar al menos una pieza a partir de las tres vistas.

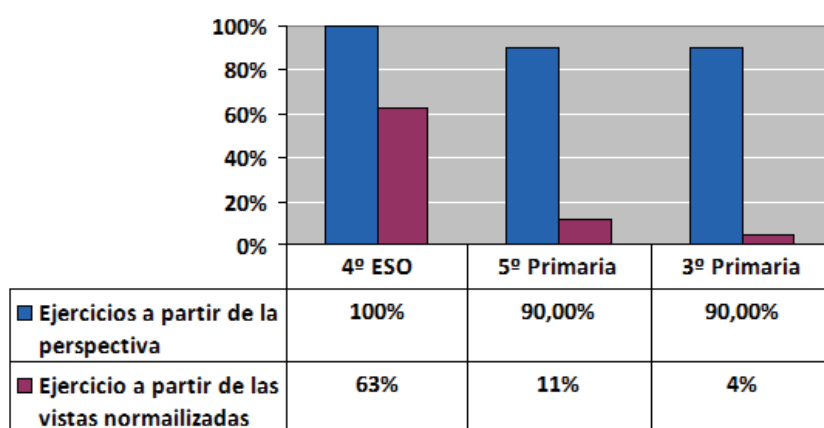


Figura 7: Resultados por niveles educativos

VII. Evaluación de satisfacción de la actividad

Un aspecto fundamental que valoramos con esta actividad es la opinión de los participantes. Por ello, en los últimos minutos de cada sesión se pasó un breve cuestionario de diez preguntas a los alumnos para medir la utilidad del ejercicio y su opinión respecto a la eficacia del mismo utilizando la escala Likert del 1 al 5. La tabla de frecuencias de los resultados de los cuestionarios se puede ver en la tabla 3.

Número de respuestas en escala de Likert (N= 70 alumnos)					
Nº Pregunta	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	0	7	13	50
2	1	4	5	14	46
3	3	1	12	20	34
4	2	2	8	18	40
5	2	4	7	7	50
6	1	0	3	3	63
7	0	2	3	15	50
8	2	2	3	4	59
9	1	4	7	9	49
10	0	6	15	23	26

Tabla 3: Tabla de Frecuencias para el cuestionario de satisfacción

Para dichos resultados se ha obtenido un alfa de Cronbach de 0,721(en particular para los 16 alumnos de 4º de la ESO un alfa de Cronbach de 0,770). Los resultados de los cuestionarios muestran que el 90% de las preguntas tuvieron una puntuación superior al 4,00 sobre 5,00 (tabla 4).

Pregunta (Escala Likert 1 a 5)		
1	Blokify es una aplicación sencilla de utilizar.	4.56
2	¿Piensas que es más sencillo realizar las figuras en Blokify que en el papel?	4.47
3	La actividad contribuye a mejorar la visión espacial.	4.06
4	¿Crees que es acertada la orientación educativa de la aplicación Blokify?	4.25
5	La incorporación de tabletas al aula es estimulante para los alumnos.	4.37
6	Me gustaría que se incorporaran más actividades de este estilo al temario de la asignatura.	4.79
7	Ha sido sencillo realizar la actividad siguiendo las instrucciones recibidas.	4.64
8	Prefiero trabajar con tabletas que hacerlo usando reglas, lápiz y papel.	4.57
9	El uso de impresoras 3D en el aula, incrementa la motivación de los alumnos debido a la posibilidad de ver su proyecto terminado.	4.39
10	Usar una impresora 3D es fácil y viable en un aula.	3.87

Tabla 4: Resultados encuesta de satisfacción

VIII. Conclusiones

Debido a que Blokify es un juego para tabletas digitales, permite introducir el modelado 3D digital en cualquier aula. Blokify es apto para la iniciación al modelado tridimensional desde la enseñanza primaria, dado que permite a los niños familiarizarse con el trabajo en un entorno 3D con medios digitales, sin requerir un aprendizaje ni conocimientos previos de programas de modelado.

Blokify es un recurso que ayuda a entender las vistas normalizadas (planta, alzado y perfil) de un objeto geométrico. Este tema es importante para el dibujo técnico y su conocimiento es necesario para estudiar carreras como ingeniería o arquitectura. Comprobamos que sirve para introducir a alumnos en la relación entre las figuras tridimensionales y su representación bidimensional mediante las vistas normalizadas y la perspectiva.

Los alumnos prefieren realizar ejercicios de perspectivas y vistas mediante modelados 3D en tableta digital antes que hacerlos sobre el soporte de papel tradicional (4,57 sobre 5). Y a ellos mismos les parece más fácil realizar estos ejercicios mediante los dispositivos digitales.

El 87,4 % de los participantes cree que la utilización de tabletas digitales en el aula aumenta su motivación. A un 95,8% de los alumnos les gustaría tener actividades de este estilo dentro de alguna asignatura. La mayoría de los alumnos, especialmente los de menor edad, estaban habituados a manejar tabletas digitales y no tuvieron ninguna dificultad en trabajar con Blokify, a pesar de ser la primera vez que la usaban.

El uso de impresoras 3D en el aula, incrementa la motivación de los alumnos debido a la posibilidad de ver su proyecto terminado (4,39 sobre 5).

Finalmente, el hecho de que varios grupos de Educación Primaria logaran llegar al nivel más avanzado y resolver algunas figuras sin tener conocimientos previos, puede hacernos reflexionar sobre si tecnologías como las utilizadas en esta experiencia, permiten acelerar los procesos de aprendizaje.

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Videojuegos para la inclusión educativa

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Resumen

En un mundo globalizado e interconectado donde las sociedades están abocadas a cambios continuos y demandan aprendizajes funcionales, activos y eficientes, hoy más que nunca, la educación se configura como un elemento primordial para desarrollar, por un lado, las nociones técnicas e instrumentales de cada una de las áreas del conocimiento y, por otro, las destrezas que capaciten a la persona para desenvolverse en estos escenarios variantes, en los que la comunicación y la socialización son herramientas fundamentales.

No obstante, se debe considerar que un aprendizaje eficaz tiene en cuenta diversos procesos psicológicos como la atención, la memoria, la percepción, la motivación, la emoción, etc.; pero además se apoya en una serie de principios psicopedagógicos y didácticos como la imitación, el interés, la actividad, la significación o el juego. Precisamente, este último instrumento pedagógico es uno de los empleados en las aulas, en todas sus variantes, para la conquista de los diversos aprendizajes dado los atributos subyacentes que posee.

El siguiente artículo presenta en líneas teóricas una de las variantes de este principio didáctico, los videojuegos, reflexionando sobre sus propiedades y los beneficios que comportan en el desarrollo de los procesos de aprendizaje inclusivos, donde se manifiestan los elementos de presencia, participación y progreso.

Palabras clave

inclusión educativa; videojuegos; competencia social y cívica

Videogames for the educative inclusion

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Abstract

In a globalized and interconnected world where societies are close to continuous changes and demanding functional, active and efficient learning. Now more than ever, education is configured as a primary element to develop, on the one hand and instrumental techniques of each of the knowledge areas notions and on the other, the skills that enable a person to function in these scenarios alternatives, where communication and socialization are key tools.

However, taking into consideration that effective learning considers various psychological processes such as attention, memory, perception, motivation, emotion; but also relies on a series of educational psychology and instructional principles as imitation, interest, activity, significance or play. Indeed, the latter is a pedagogical tool in classrooms employees, in all its variants, for the conquest of the various learning as internal attributes it own.

The following article presents theoretical lines one alternative of this educational principle, videogames, thinking about their properties and the benefits that involve in developing inclusive learning processes, where the elements of presence, participation and achievement is demonstrated.

Keywords

inclusive education; video games; social and civic competence

I. Introducción

Los seres humanos tienen rasgos comunes, pero a la vez, también poseen características que los diferencian a los unos de los otros, esta circunstancia, se da en todas las sociedades, lo que hace ineludible la atención a la diversidad.

Esta deferencia a la diversidad es necesaria si consideramos la globalización que se ha producido en las sociedades del siglo XXI en la política, la economía, la educación y los aspectos sociales, esta variedad posee un abanico multidisciplinar ya que condiciona aspectos como la cultura, la ideología, la religión, los estilos de vida, los ritmos de aprendizaje, etc.

Abordar las mismas desde la escuela y las aulas ha cobrado una gran relevancia, en las dos últimas décadas, propiciando marcos de referencia para una actuación de calidad que favorezca la incorporación a la sociedad de los individuos de forma eficaz.

La intención de educar en la diversidad implica conocer y reflexionar sobre las diferencias individuales y las necesidades educativas que surgen con las mismas, tomándolas como referencia para la acción didáctica – pedagógica y, modificando de esta forma el contexto escolar y la cultura educativa. Este concepto no es sólo el eje vertebrador de los sistemas educativos vigentes, sino que es uno de los fundamentos de la igualdad de oportunidades que está reconocida en las sociedades democráticas.

Esta cultura educativa se fundamenta en el beneficio que puede suponer la aceptación y aprobación de la diversidad como elemento que genera la inclusión en los individuos.

Cabe esperar que la educación inclusiva contribuya a desarrollar la ansiada cohesión social convirtiéndose en un elemento indispensable para que la sociedad pueda progresar hacia los ideales de paz, libertad y justicia social; un servicio público que beneficie el desarrollo humano en condiciones de igualdad, no constituyéndose en un factor adicional de exclusión (...)(Arnaiz, 2012 p. 41).

Sin embargo, la adscripción a la educación inclusiva como un proceso lógico para convivir en las sociedades actuales precisa de la figura del docente y de sus prácticas pedagógicas, lo cual sugiere buscar alternativas y adaptaciones a su metodología a través de innovaciones y experiencias que favorezcan el desarrollo de la inclusión en su aula; encontramos de esta forma un aliado en cualquier recurso que beneficie esta adquisición de comportamientos, conocimientos y aprendizajes, concretamente el empleo de los videojuegos o juegos digitales se presentan como un elemento ejemplificador para esta acción, dado su carácter lúdico, motivador y atrayente que tiene para el alumnado.

II. Educación y el valor de la inclusión en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje

Actualmente las organizaciones e instituciones educativas están asistiendo a la absoluta e íntegra implementación de los cuatro pilares básicos que sustentan la educación a lo largo de la vida, propuestos hace casi dos décadas por Delors (1996), los mismos señalaban los siguientes principios:

- El aprendizaje y el desarrollo de procesos y habilidades que favorezcan el inicio y el progreso de la adquisición de un conocimiento de carácter generalista o cultural, compuesto y a la par, de las aportaciones de las realidades metodológicas, conceptuales, técnicas, instrumentales y metodológicas de las diversas áreas científicas; en otros términos aprender a conocer y, por tanto aprender a aprender.
- El aprendizaje y la proyección de una serie de destrezas que fomenten la cualificación para desenvolverse de forma óptima y creciente en las situaciones cotidianas, lo que se concretiza en aprender a hacer.
- El desarrollo y el crecimiento de la conciencia de uno mismo y de los otros, considerando la convivencia democrática en sociedad y la cultura de paz, es decir, aprender a vivir o aprender a convivir.
- Y, por último, la conciencia y percepción de uno mismo, de sus capacidades, destrezas y habilidades, desarrollando su personalidad y favoreciendo un incremento de la autonomía y la responsabilidad personal, lo cual coincide con aprender a ser.

Todos estos aspectos han desembocado en las competencias clave, las mismas son definidas por la Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (en adelante OECD) como "Una competencia es más que conocimientos y destrezas. Involucra la habilidad de enfrentar demandas complejas, apoyándose en y movilizándolo recursos psicosociales (incluyendo destrezas y actitudes) en un contexto en particular" (2005, p. 4).

Precisamente este organismo internacional realiza una categorización para la clasificación de las competencias clave que necesita cualquier ciudadano para desenvolverse en las sociedades del siglo XXI, considerando la variabilidad, extensión y complejidad de las mismas, estas son:

- Primero, los individuos deben poder usar un amplio rango de herramientas para interactuar efectivamente con el ambiente: tanto físicas como en la tecnología de la información y socioculturales como en el uso del lenguaje. Necesitan comprender dichas herramientas ampliamente, cómo para adaptarlas a sus propios fines, usar las herramientas de manera interactiva.
- Segundo, en un mundo cada vez más interdependiente, los individuos necesitan poder comunicarse con otros, y debido a que encontrarán personas de diversos orígenes, es importante que puedan interactuar en grupos heterogéneos.
- Tercero, los individuos necesitan poder tomar la responsabilidad de manejar sus propias vidas, situar sus vidas en un contexto social más amplio y actuar de manera autónoma. (OECD, 2005 p. 5).

La segunda categoría de esta tipificación manifiesta la relevancia de desarrollar destrezas y habilidades para interactuar en grupos heterogéneos, en sociedades más globalizadas donde la diversidad es un factor nuclear a considerar, en este sentido Puigdellívol (2007, p. 20) alude tres razones para asumir la diversidad en la escuela:

- Realidad social ineludible. Considerando el proceso de globalización mundial, las actuales sociedades se hacen más complejas con una gran diversidad social, religiosa, ideológica, lingüística y cultural en las que se busca el equilibrio y la convivencia de

esta heterogeneidad de aspectos. La escuela, por lo tanto, se convierte en una institución mediadora de la que se dotan las sociedades para integrar a sus jóvenes.

- Necesidad educativa de primer orden. Los centros educativos se convierten en contextos ideales para la convivencia y, naturalmente, para educar en la diversidad y en la comprensión del otro, fomentando el desarrollo de diversos valores.
- La diversidad como valor educativo. Se debe entender la diversidad como un valor educativo primordial en las sociedades actuales, el cual no se puede desarrollar en contextos de homogeneidad.

A pesar de que hace unas décadas la diversidad en la escuela era considerada como un elemento desfavorable que impedía un desarrollo normalizado de las dinámicas educativas y la misma era afrontada con mecanismos de ordenación diferenciadores y segregados (Parrilla, 2002), diversas organizaciones y administraciones internacionales abogaron por la concienciación de la diversidad como un elemento y valor clave en la educación, dando lugar a la inclusión.

La inclusión es vista como un proceso para abordar y responder a la diversidad de necesidades de todos los alumnos a través de una mayor participación en el aprendizaje, las culturas y las comunidades, y la reducción de la exclusión dentro y desde la educación. Implica cambios y modificaciones en el contenido, enfoques, estructuras y estrategias, con una visión común que abarca a todos los niños de un rango apropiado de edad y la convicción de que es responsabilidad del sistema regular la educar de todos los niños (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, en adelante UNESCO, 2005 p. 13).

En consecuencia, en estos últimos años han existido distintas interpretaciones del término inclusión por parte de diferentes autores, así como, diferencias en las actuaciones que se deben llevar a cabo en la escuela (Echeita, 2006); no obstante, al analizar la conceptualización propuesta por la UNESCO (2005) se deduce que al posicionarse en una sociedad democrática es necesario reconocer prácticas educativas y sociales encaminadas a una participación activa del individuo tanto en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje como en la organización de los centros escolares (Parrilla, 2002).

Conviene subrayar, que existen cuatro elementos comunes a cualquier definición de inclusión educativa (Ainscow, 2001; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Echeita & Ainscow, 2011), que son:

- La inclusión como proceso, lo cual implica el análisis continuo y constante de alternativas para responder a la diversidad de los individuos en las instituciones educativas.
- La inclusión en la búsqueda de la presencia, la participación y el progreso, como principios que rigen cualquier acto democrático donde deben estar presentes los principios de equidad e igualdad.
- La inclusión obliga a la identificación y la eliminación de barreras, dado que estas últimas imposibilitan la actuación efectiva de los derechos humanos y, por tanto la identidad personal, social y cultural de las personas.
- La inclusión enfatiza sus acciones en grupos de alumnos que presentan elementos constituyentes de algún tipo de exclusión o marginación, lo que sugiere un compromiso educativo y mayor atención con los individuos que se encuentran en circunstancias de más vulnerabilidad.

En este sentido, Booth & Dyson (2006, citado en Muntaner, 2010, p. 9) señalan que la implementación efectiva de la inclusión en las prácticas educativas puede precisarse y concretarse en tres variables, denominadas comúnmente "las tres P", las mismas son definidas en la tabla 1.

	Definiciones
Presencia	El acceso de todo el alumnado a los entornos educativos manifiesten o no necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo, como indica Arnaiz (2003).
Participación	La iniciativa, la toma de decisiones y la implicación en los contextos educativos de todos los alumnos y alumnas, con indiferencia de que posean necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo, tal y como indican Stainback & Stainback (2001).
Progreso	Los estudiantes con independencia de si tienen o no necesidades específicas de apoyo educativo tienen éxito en la etapa escolar, es decir, se les proporcionan la oportunidad de alcanzar y mantener un nivel aceptable de conocimientos, como apunta Arnaiz (2003).

Tabla 1. Las tres variables que debe cumplir cualquier proceso educativo inclusivo.

Nota: Fuente elaboración propia.

Las políticas, los marcos de referencia, las investigaciones, las experiencias y las innovaciones sobre la educación inclusiva, en la actualidad, parten de este escenario, lo cual significa "abordar una temática caleidoscópica, un prisma con varias caras o planos, cada uno con ciertas dosis de fundamento" (Arnaiz, 2012, p. 31); como por ejemplo la formación, inicial y continua, y el papel que el profesorado juega en estas prácticas, siendo una pieza elemental (Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo, 2014) tanto en la educación como en la sociedad.

El posicionamiento y las prácticas docentes inclusivas fundamentaran una cultura educativa basada es aspectos democráticos y plurales, legitimando la diversidad, en todo sus espectros, como un aspecto esencial de las sociedades globalizadas y de los centros escolares, donde como señalan Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo (2014, p. 125) "la escuela representa el único espacio de contacto obligatorio entre diversos grupos sociales, en el que se dirime la experiencia de cooperación o de conflicto".

Así entendida, requiere que los centros dejen de ser instrumentos de homogeneización, de normalización y de asimilación para convertirse en contextos inclusivos y eficaces en el marco de una escuela para todos. Y, desde un punto de vista organizativo y curricular, que todos los ámbitos y disciplinas científicas se aproximen a este fenómeno, ofreciendo un panorama tanto de análisis y/o valoración de dicha cuestión, como de posibles soluciones o directrices a tomar para alcanzar la meta. Este cambio implica, igualmente, un proceso de aprendizaje, de construcción de un futuro común, basado en las aportaciones de todos y en el reconocimiento de la diferencia desde un plano de igualdad (Arnaiz, 2012 pp. 31 – 32).

En resumen, la integración en la escuela ha pasado a ser inclusión en la escuela, desarrollando programas y adaptando el contexto para que todo el alumnado sin o con algún tipo de necesidad o

diversidad formen parte activa de su aula y de su comunidad, así como, de la sociedad en la que conviven, promoviendo de esta forma las estrategias de presencia, participación y progreso, favoreciendo nuevas iniciativas por parte del profesorado que consideren esta nueva realidad.

III. Los videojuegos como principio didáctico en la educación y en la inclusión

El juego ha sido un recurso y un principio didáctico empleado durante muchas décadas en educación, en especial en las etapas destinadas a la infancia y a la primaria (Candia, 2013; Delgado, 2011), por los docentes para el desarrollo del proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje. En la actualidad, con la incorporación de los medios digitales a la sociedad, este elemento ha desembocado en los videojuegos y los juegos digitales, los cuales pueden ser empleados con la misma funcionalidad que los primeros.

Las distintas teorías psicológicas consideran el juego como uno de los elementos a analizar en la adquisición del aprendizaje, Piaget a través de su teoría constructivista adjudica a éste la construcción de pensamientos y comportamientos o Ausubel en su concepción de un aprendizaje significativo le atribuye aspectos motivacionales y de interés para la adquisición del conocimiento (Sampedro, 2012).

“Los juegos educativos han demostrado que fomentan la implicación en el pensamiento crítico, en la resolución creativa de problemas y en el trabajo en equipo, habilidades que conducen a soluciones para dilemas sociales y ambientales complejos” (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014 p. 42). Estas observaciones se relacionan también, con un conjunto de desarrollos que se le atribuye al empleo didáctico de los videojuegos y juegos digitales (Marín & García, 2005; Marín & Ramírez, 2012):

- Desarrollo del pensamiento reflexivo y del razonamiento, favoreciendo la toma de conciencia de lo aprendido y contribuyendo al progreso del aprendizaje.
- Desarrollo de la capacidad de atención y la memoria, como procesos psicológicos cognitivos necesarios para cualquier acto de aprendizaje (Sampedro, 2012).
- Desarrollo de las habilidades necesarias para resolver conflictos o situaciones problemáticas, asimismo, el desarrollo de las capacidades de trabajo colaborativo, ambos son elementos clave en la práctica de la inclusión (Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo, 2014)
- Desarrollo de la capacidad de superación, con la motivación que produce el alcanzar culminar el fin del juego provoca la necesidad de progresar en el conocimiento y aprendizaje.
- Desarrollo de la capacidad de relación, de conductas socialmente aceptadas y la disminución de conductas impulsivas y de autodestrucción adquiriendo pautas de convivencia y de resolución de conflictos de forma lúdica (Romera, Ortega & Monks, 2008)

En consonancia, a la hora de diseñar videojuegos y juegos digitales se debe considerar, entre otros, estos aspectos y desarrollos mencionados (Morales, 2013), asimismo meditar el objetivo final del proceso de aprendizaje que se desea conseguir.

En este sentido, los videojuegos se convierten en recursos muy eficaces para la inclusión en las aulas, considerando que por sí mismos propician la socialización, la equidad y la igualdad, eliminan

barreras producidas por cualquier tipología de exclusión (cultural, ideológica, religiosa, social, etc.) y, concretamente favorece los principios de presencia, participación y progreso, los videojuegos “son elementos que no deben pasar desapercibidos de la cotidianeidad de la vida social y educativa de los individuos, permitirá a los estudiantes ver su evolución y crecimiento, incentivando así sus ganas de participar y en consecuencia de aprender” (Marín & Martín, 2014 p. 25).

La reflexión sobre la implementación y aplicación del juego y su alternativa tecnológica y digital, videojuegos y juegos digitales, como principios didácticos que propician una mejora en el proceso de aprendizaje y posibilitan experiencias innovadoras en la enseñanza, dado su carácter motivador y potenciador del desarrollo cognitivo general, nos lleva a incidir sobre su beneficio en el posicionamiento cultural educativo inclusivo, en otros términos, la colaboración que el empleo de los videojuegos produce en los espacios escolares que se atribuyen a unas prácticas inclusivas para dotar al alumnado de una educación acorde a los requerimientos de las sociedades actuales.

En este sentido, diversas investigaciones (Cagiltay, Ozcelik & Ozcelik, 2015; Hamlen, 2011; Hong, Cheng, Hwang, Lee & Chang, 2009) ponen de manifiesto la relación que existe entre las estrategias cognitivas y el uso de videojuegos o juegos digitales, destacando que cada jugador desarrolla unas habilidades mentales o estilos para conseguir el objetivo final, superar el juego, lo cual beneficia la cognición de los participantes y, por tanto facilita las destrezas para incrementar el aprendizaje.

De igual forma, estos estudios, reflejan el binomio motivación y empleo de videojuegos y juegos digitales, lo cual, como sugiere Hamlen (2011), tiene su base en perspectivas psicológicas, basadas principalmente en el disfrute que provoca la superación de las metas, provocando la atracción y la atención hacia la tarea encomendada en el juego.

De acuerdo con estas ideas, se infiere que el empleo de videojuegos facilita el desarrollo y progreso de estrategias cognitivas, al mismo tiempo, refuerza la motivación por el aprendizaje de los mismos, implicando que este recurso o herramienta pedagógica, aplicada de forma eficaz en las escuelas, favorezca factores psicológicos y cognitivos en el alumnado, propiciando la atención de las características individuales y de personalidad como elementos esenciales de la diversidad, dando respuesta a una educación de calidad adaptada a las necesidades y peculiaridades de cada estudiante.

Mientras un número creciente de instituciones y programas educativos están experimentando con los videojuegos, también se ha observado una atención cada vez mayor rodeando la gamification - la integración de elementos, mecánicas y contextos de los videojuegos en situaciones y escenarios ajenos a ellos - (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014 p. 42).

La integración de videojuegos a las aulas se ha convertido en una realidad en las instituciones educativas, precisamente el Informe Horizon de 2014 expone algunos ejemplos de las experiencias que se están llevando a cabo en estos momentos, asimismo, señala la implementación de este proceso en los próximos años como elemento asociado a las tecnologías educativas, por tanto es evidente la necesidad de analizar su significación para el desarrollo de una educación inclusiva que considera la diversidad como motor de la sociedad y el aprendizaje.

IV. La significación del videojuego para el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva

Como se ha comentado con anterioridad, las políticas y actuaciones educativas se encaminan al desarrollo de las competencias, entre las que se destaca la competencia social y cívica porque como señala Pagès (2009)

Tal vez se la pueda considerar la competencia principal de la enseñanza obligatoria, ya que su finalidad última es formar ciudadanos y ciudadanas capaces de saber convivir democráticamente con los demás, de participar en la vida social, laboral, cultural y política de su mundo, intentando mejorarla. Ciertamente, para formar ciudadanos y ciudadanas son necesarias las demás competencias, y muchos conocimientos, pero... ser ciudadano o ciudadana, saber convivir con los demás, es una condición sine qua non de las sociedades democráticas (p.7)

Conforme a lo expresado por este autor el desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica lleva implícito la aplicación y adquisición de una cultura inclusiva, que se debe tratar desde los primeros años de escolarización, a través de la iniciativa y la innovación de los docentes.

Conviene subrayar que en la 48ª Conferencia Internacional de Educación, titulada "Inclusive Education: The way of the future", celebrada en el año 2008, promovida por la UNESCO se fundamenta la importancia del papel docente para crear entornos inclusivos como uno de los agentes de cambio en la educación de calidad, además, en ella se presentan interrogantes como, por ejemplo, si los docentes durante su formación inicial tienen posibilidades de adquirir "cultura de la inclusión" o si se le dota de las competencias necesarias y de las herramientas metodológicas acordes para considerar las necesidades, elaborar estrategias pedagógicas y abordar así la diversidad.

En este sentido, Barrio (2009) señala una serie de aspectos que pueden considerarse a la hora de formular acciones, estrategias y metodologías inclusivas por parte de los docentes, estos son:

- El origen se encuentra en las prácticas y conocimientos previos, los docentes conocen el ambiente y contexto donde desarrollan su labor, al igual que al alumnado al que dirigen los procesos de enseñanza – aprendizaje, este hecho les facilitará establecer mecanismos más creativos y prácticos para promover una interacción más inclusiva entre alumno – alumno y alumno – profesor.
- Las diferencias pueden servir como oportunidades de aprendizaje, buscando en la diversidad un elemento para suscitar nuevas intervenciones, que pueden resultar de la práctica diaria y de las experiencias previas del docente.
- Examinar que se barreras existen para la participación, analizando y evaluando los elementos que imposibilitan la implicación, autonomía y toma de decisiones del alumnado; para posteriormente incorporar actuaciones que potencien la participación de todos (Cabero & Córdoba, 2009)
- Apoyar el aprendizaje usando los recursos disponibles, el empleo eficaz y eficiente de las herramientas y recursos, incluyendo los digitales, así como los profesionales y las familias que comprenden la comunidad educativa dado que su cooperación facilitará la implementación de las acciones inclusivas en el aula y en el centro. Algunos ejemplos de este aspecto lo encontramos en los grupos interactivos (Álvarez & Puigdemívol, 2014) o en

el aprendizaje cooperativo (Santos, Cernada & Lorenzo, 2014), los mismos se sustentan en las teorías socio – cultural y dialógica del aprendizaje.

- Desarrollar un código común entre profesionales, la relación con otros profesionales del campo educativo favorece la divulgación y comunicación de las experiencias inclusivas llevadas a cabo en cada contexto, las mismas inducen a la reflexión y el perfeccionamiento sobre la labor docente.
- Establecer condiciones para innovar, dado que el docente es el principal precursor de las experiencias e innovaciones educativas e inclusivas es necesario dotarle de un clima de trabajo que fomente estas iniciativas (García & López, 2012)

En lo referente al fomento de la educación inclusiva, una escuela para todos, se ha señalado anteriormente, que la misma se consigue a través del desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica logrando de esta forma que la inclusión se traslade a la sociedad, para lograr esta finalidad el docente debe prestar atención a las innovaciones educativas, estableciendo condiciones para la misma y proporcionando experiencias enriquecedoras al alumnado a través del proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje.

Estas oportunidades para el aprendizaje y desarrollo de la competencia cívica y social puede conseguirse a través de la implementación de los videojuegos, dado que como señala el estudio realizado por Puig & Morales (2015) entre las estrategias didácticas que facilitan el desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica, clave para la formación de la personalidad posibilitando comunicar las capacidades y conocimientos que le permitan ser ciudadanos democráticos (Pagès, 2009), se encuentra el juego o su alternativa digital los videojuegos dado que los mismos fundamentan la presencia, participación y progreso.

Constituye una actividad de importancia capital para la adquisición de ciertos aspectos básicos para la vida de las personas, tales como las conductas de apego y vinculación afectiva, las habilidades comunicativas y la capacidad de gestionar la libertad y la toma de decisiones, así como el desarrollo del pensamiento creativo. En definitiva, la actividad lúdica permite al niño o la niña poner en práctica las competencias necesarias para prepararse para la vida en sociedad (Romera, Ortega & Monks, 2008 p. 195).

Como señalan estas autoras los videojuegos se convierten en una herramienta didáctica eficaz en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje para desarrollar todos los planos de la inclusión que repercuten en la sociedad a través de la competencia social y cívica, tan demanda en las sociedades actuales; con la implementación de los videojuegos, considerando que los mismos se fundamentan en la tecnología y en el espectro digital (Rodríguez & Arroyo, 2014)

- Aumentando el grado de autonomía, independencia y la toma de decisiones proporcionando la participación.
- Facilitarán la individualización de los procesos de aprendizaje, considerando los diferentes estilos de aprendizaje, de comunicación, siendo flexibles con la diversidad de cada sujeto, de esta forma favorece el progreso.
- El entretenimiento y la motivación que llevan en su naturaleza los videojuegos acrecienta la socialización con el resto del grupo y el acceso a la comunidad y el aprendizaje desarrollando la presencia.

- Por otro lado, disminuyen o eliminan las barreras que se pueden producir por la diversidad, facilitando la extinción de la exclusión y la marginalidad reforzando la autoestima y el valor de uno mismo (Marín & Ramírez, 2012)

En definitiva, el videojuego y los juegos digitales son recursos innovadores, eficaces y significativos para el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje en el marco de una educación inclusiva, con la meta de adquirir la competencia social y cívica como estandarte de una habilidades y conocimientos que hacen al individuo un ciudadano activo con presencia, participación y progreso en su etapa educativa y en la sociedad en la que convive.

Dejando a un lado la interacción social que provoca la aplicación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales y, por tanto el desarrollo de la competencia social y cívica; al mismo tiempo, estos recursos didáctico – pedagógicos, en concreto los denominados “serious games” estimulan la conciencia cultural, como señalan Earp, Ott, Popescu, Romero & Usart (2014), lo cual favorece la adquisición del concepto de diferencia de forma óptima induciendo la toma de conciencia de las aportaciones de los otros y la participación activa o conjunta con un fin común, el dominio del juego.

La aplicación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales en la educación favorece el potencial educativo, asimismo, como indican Earp, Ott, Popescu, Romero & Usart (2014), fortalecen otras habilidades y valores como la colaboración entre iguales, la creatividad, el liderazgo y la actitud positiva ante el fallo; es precisamente este último contenido el que facilita la presencia o acceso de todos los estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje, dado que como variable de la educación inclusiva asegura el acercamiento a la escuela sin perjuicio de la exclusión.

Asimismo, la implementación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales posibilitan, como se ha comentado con anterioridad, el empleo de distintas estrategias de cognición que favorecen la diversidad al desarrollar de manera sustancial las características individuales y de personalidad, lo cual implica el progreso de todos los estudiantes, al proporcionar la oportunidad de alcanzar y mantener un nivel de éxito; de esta forma se hace patente otra de las variables de los procesos educativos inclusivos.

Por último, el atractivo que subyace en el uso de los videojuegos y juegos digitales potencia la participación del alumnado, tercera variable de la educación inclusiva, favoreciendo la iniciativa y la toma de decisiones en el objetivo final alcanzar el dominio del juego.

Al considerar, los elementos que confluyen en la aplicación y uso de los videojuegos, podemos observar la capacidad y potencial que tienen los mismos en la adquisición del aprendizaje, de igual forma, como proporcionan escenarios para el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva, concretamente las variables que la propagan la presencia, la participación y el progreso de todo el alumnado sin distinciones. En este sentido, la implementación de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales, en las aulas, se convierten en un elemento metodológico de gran valor para los docentes, al desencadenar destrezas, habilidades y actitudes que integran en una actividad, de forma activa, a todo el alumnado considerando sus capacidades individuales y globalizando el proceso educativo.

V. Conclusión

En estas líneas hemos querido reflejar la relevancia de emplear los videojuegos o los juegos digitales como recursos que favorecen y facilitan el proceso de inclusión en las aulas, dado que la implementación de los mismos es un hecho inminente atendiendo al Informe Horizon de 2014.

Aprender a mantener relaciones interpersonales efectivas se convierte en una tarea prioritaria en la escuela en todos los niveles de edad, pero particularmente entre los más pequeños, con los que habría que acentuar la educación para el desarrollo y la competencia social (Romera, Ortega & Monks, 2008 p. 195).

La implementación de los videojuegos puede ayudar en el desarrollo de conocimientos y habilidades para desenvolverse en sociedades democráticas, dado que como sugieren estas autoras es necesario mantener relaciones interpersonales efectivas que consideren la cohesión social partiendo de las diversidades de cada individuo.

De esta forma los videojuegos se convierten en elementos espléndidos para potenciar la motivación y atención del alumnado en su proceso de aprendizaje, así mismo, su empleo y aplicación en las aulas proporciona condicionantes para acercar una cultura educativa inclusiva al conocimiento de cualquier materia o área de conocimiento considerando que aporta una serie de desarrollos y aspectos, entre los que se destacan la presencia, la participación y el progreso educativo. Por otro lado, el desarrollo de estos principios facilitará la adquisición de la competencia social y cívica, siendo esta precisamente la que llevará a una sociedad más inclusiva.

No debemos olvidar, que los videojuegos forman parte de las actividades diarias de la mayoría de los sujetos, en especial de los infantes y adolescentes, por este motivo es un recurso atractivo que se puede y se debe incorporar al aulas, ya que sus potencialidades y beneficios propician la sociabilidad de los sujetos, siendo un factor clave en las sociedades actuales donde la diversidad es una condición.

Es precisamente los elementos y aspectos que se hallan en el uso de los videojuegos y los juegos digitales lo que provoca que su aplicación en las aulas favorezca el aumento del potencial del aprendizaje en todo el alumnado, con indiferencia de sus características personales e individuales, dado que la implementación del mismo, como indican diversas investigaciones (Cagiltay, Ozcelik & Ozcelik, 2015; Hamlen, 2011; Hong, Cheng, Hwang, Lee & Chang, 2009) propicia el intercambio comunicativo entre iguales, con un fin último, la búsqueda de la superación de la tarea y el reto propuesto en el juego.

Este intercambio entre iguales, ayuda a la inclusión de todos en los procesos educativos beneficiando el desarrollo de la educación inclusiva; sin embargo, la aplicación de esta herramienta metodológica en las aulas en la búsqueda de aumentar las potencialidades de aprendizaje de todos los estudiantes, se convierte en una planificación y programación minuciosa del docente, dado que debe tener en cuenta diversos aspectos para su puesta en práctica, tales como los contenidos que se aprenderán, el nivel de dificultad, los estilos cognitivos que el alumnado empleará, la temporalidad de la actividad, etc.

En conclusión, los videojuegos y los juegos digitales son una herramienta metodológica de gran valor educativo para potenciar la inclusión del alumnado en las aulas e involucrarle en su propio aprendizaje, aunque esta implementación en los escenarios educativos provocan la necesidad de capacitación de los docentes para la eficacia de los mismos en la presencia, participación y progreso, como variables que sustentan la educación inclusiva.

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Tecnologías emergentes para la enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales. Una experiencia con el uso de Realidad Aumentada en la formación inicial de maestros

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Resumen

La Realidad Aumentada está considerada como una de las tecnologías emergentes con mayor impacto en la docencia. El presente artículo recoge una investigación sobre una experiencia didáctica realizada con estudiantes universitarios, futuros maestros, en el campo de las ciencias sociales, con el objetivo de conocer su opinión sobre la Realidad Aumentada y su aplicación educativa. La investigación, que siguió un enfoque de tipo mixto (cuantitativo y cualitativo), se llevó a cabo en estudiantes del Grado de Maestro en Educación Infantil y Primaria, en la Facultad de Educación de Albacete (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha) en el primer trimestre del curso 2014-2015. Se administró el Cuestionario LabinTic_RA (Cózar, De Moya, Hernández y Hernández, 2014) para conocer la percepción de los estudiantes sobre la Realidad Aumentada respecto a su utilización en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje y su nivel de conocimiento de esta herramienta. Los resultados revelaron la valoración muy positiva que conceden los estudiantes a las TIC en educación y a la Realidad Aumentada por sus beneficios didácticos: motivación, aprendizaje interactivo o adquisición significativa de conocimientos, entre otros. La virtualización de la enseñanza es una realidad, siendo necesaria una formación inicial de los futuros docentes orientada al conocimiento y uso de tecnologías educativas emergentes.

Palabras clave

Tecnologías emergentes, realidad aumentada, ciencias sociales, formación inicial del profesorado.

Emerging Technologies in Social Sciences Teaching. An Experience Using Augmented Reality in Teacher Training

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Abstract

Augmented Reality is considered one of the emerging technologies with the highest impact on teaching. The current paper shows a research about an educative experience carried out in university students, future teachers, in the field of social sciences, in order to know their opinion about Augmented Reality and its educational application. This study, which followed a mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative), was conducted among students in the Master Degree at the Faculty of Education in Albacete (University of Castilla-La Mancha) in the first term of academic year 2014/2015. LabinTic_RA Questionnaire (Cozar, De Moya, Hernandez and Hernandez, 2014) was administered to analyse students' perceptions about Augmented Reality. Thus, students' use in the teaching and learning process and their knowledge of this tool were taking into account for our research. Results revealed that students give a highly positive assessment to ICT and Augmented Reality for its educative benefits: motivation, interactive learning or significant acquisition of knowledge, among others. The virtualization of education is a reality, so it is necessary the teacher training in order to know and to use emerging educational technologies.

Keywords

Emerging technologies, augmented reality, social sciences, teacher training.

I. Introducción

La integración de la competencia digital en el ámbito educativo ha tenido que hacer frente a numerosos desafíos que han permitido afrontar los nuevos tiempos, planteando nuevos modelos de aprendizaje, procedimientos, estrategias y recursos que enriquezcan el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje. A nivel institucional se han realizado grandes esfuerzos económicos para facilitar su penetración en la práctica educativa. En las aulas, se han introducido ordenadores, pizarras digitales, notebook o tablets pc, entre otros, y junto a estas herramientas se han desarrollado gran cantidad de materiales multimedia interactivos y recursos didácticos que permiten el desarrollo de numerosas habilidades cognitivas, así como la adquisición y consolidación de las competencias digitales básicas (Del Moral, 2009).

En el marco de estos cambios, no encontramos un único modelo pedagógico que resuma las teorías de aprendizaje de la nueva era digital. Entre las "teorías para aprender con tecnologías emergentes" sugeridas por autores como Anderson (2010) o Wheeler (2012) aparecen planteamientos no tan novedosos como el constructivismo y la teoría de la complejidad, y otros nuevos conceptos formulados tras la aparición de la web e Internet como la pedagogía de la proximidad (Mejias, 2005), la heutagogía (Hase and Kenyon, 2000 y 2007), el conectivismo (Siemens, 2005), el aprendizaje rizomático (Cormier, 2008), el aprendizaje autorregulado (Beishuizen, Carneiro y Steffens, 2007), la teoría LaaN (Chatti, Schroeder y Jarke, 2012 y Chatti, 2013) o el aprendizaje entre iguales (Corneli, 2012 y Corneli y Danoff, 2011), entre otros, que conforman el ecosistema pedagógico de la integración de las TIC en el aula (Adell y Castañeda, 2013).

Toda una serie de pedagogías emergentes que surgen alrededor de las tecnologías apellidadas con el mismo calificativo -emergentes- (Veletsianos, 2010) y su introducción en la educación, y que intentan aprovechar todo su potencial comunicativo, informacional, colaborativo, interactivo, creativo e innovador en el marco de una nueva cultura del aprendizaje (Adell y Castañeda, 2012). En este artículo pretendemos acercarnos a una de esas denominadas tecnologías informáticas emergentes: la Realidad Aumentada (RA). Una tecnología que nos ofrece un interesante conjunto de aplicaciones y modos de implementación que enriquecen la práctica educativa desde la visualización directa o indirecta de elementos del mundo real combinados (o aumentados) con elementos virtuales generados por un ordenador, dando lugar a una realidad mixta, en tiempo real y en consonancia semántica con objetos del entorno (Cobo y Moravec, 2011).

II. Tecnologías emergentes: Realidad Aumentada

La Realidad Aumentada se define en el mundo científico a principios de los años noventa cuando la tecnología basada en ordenadores de procesamiento rápido, técnicas de renderizado de gráficos en tiempo real, y sistemas de seguimiento de precisión portables, permiten implementar la combinación de imágenes generadas por el ordenador sobre la visión del mundo real que tiene el usuario (Basogain et al, 2007). En 1992, Caudell y Mizell introducirían este término en la comunicación "Augmented Reality: an application of headsup display technology to manual manufacturing processes" para el congreso *IEEE Hawaii International Conference on System Science*. Poco tiempo después, Bareld y Hendrix (1995), la definirían como la ampliación del mundo real con imágenes sintéticas, en un escenario, en el que estas imágenes se utilizan como

un complemento de la escena del mundo real. Ese mismo año Durlach y Mavor, en un informe sobre realidad virtual, describen la Realidad Aumentada como sistemas que combinan entornos reales y virtuales. Y en 1997, Ronald Azuma, uno de los autores más citados en esta materia, se refiere a esta tecnología como la fusión de una visión directa o indirecta de un entorno físico (mundo real), cuyos elementos se combinan con objetos digitales para crear una realidad mixta en tiempo real. Además deja establecidas sus tres características más significativas: combinar lo real con lo virtual; ser interactiva y en tiempo real; y estar registrada en 3D.

En los últimos años ha aumentado considerablemente el número de publicaciones que centran su atención sobre esta tecnología, proliferando del mismo modo, las definiciones y clasificaciones sobre las formas y tecnologías que se recogen bajo este término. Una definición completa, a la par que sencilla, es la que recogen Estebanell y otros (2012: 136) quienes la presentan como “una tecnología que permite añadir información virtual sobre la realidad”. Un proceso que se realiza en tiempo real a través de la captura de una cámara, estableciendo una relación espacial entre la información virtual y su entorno real. De este modo, objetos virtuales bidimensionales y/o tridimensionales se superponen al mundo real, suscitando la coexistencia de dos mundos, virtual y real, en el mismo espacio, en tiempo real (De Pedro y Martínez, 2012). Kato (2010) se centra en su utilidad y la define como información virtual (objetos o anotaciones) que pueden ser superpuestas a imágenes del mundo real como si coexistieran.

En muchas ocasiones, la RA se confunde con la Realidad Virtual con quien comparte algunas características en común. La principal diferencia entre ambas radica en que la Realidad Aumentada no reemplaza el mundo real, como en el caso de la Realidad Virtual, sino que conserva lo que percibe el usuario, completándolo con información virtual. Como señala Tapia (2008), la Realidad Aumentada lleva la información dentro del mundo real del usuario en vez de llevar al usuario dentro del mundo virtual del ordenador. En este sentido, resulta interesante hacer referencia al continuo de Milgram (1994), citado por múltiples autores, en el que se establece una clasificación de los diferentes niveles a los que podemos asistir en una línea entre la realidad y la virtualidad, en base a la cantidad de entorno generado por ordenador. Al área comprendida entre los dos extremos, donde se combina lo real y lo virtual, se denomina Realidad Mezclada o Mixta. De Pedro (2011: 301) señala que la RA es “capaz de complementar la percepción e interacción con el mundo real, brindando al usuario un escenario real aumentado con información adicional generada por ordenador. De este modo, la realidad física se combina con elementos virtuales disponiéndose de una realidad mixta en tiempo real”. Interacción, realidad mixta y tiempo real se convierten, sin duda, en las claves de la RA: el usuario interactúa con el entorno y éste, en tiempo real, completa con información virtual el mundo real que percibe el usuario (Basagoain et al, 2007; Prendes, 2015).

También son numerosas las clasificaciones sobre las formas y tecnologías que se suelen englobar bajo el mismo término de Realidad Aumentada. Portalés (2008) establece su catalogación, atendiendo a distintos criterios: según el entorno físico en el que se desarrolla la aplicación, pueden ser cerrados o al aire libre o abiertos; según la extensión que abarquen, locales o ubicuos; según la movilidad de los dispositivos de registro y/o displays, podemos distinguir entre sistemas móviles o sistemas espaciales; según el número de usuarios que simultáneamente pueden interactuar con el sistema, individuales o colaborativos; y, según el tipo de colaboración establecida, presenciales o remotos.

Estebanell y otros (2012) optan por una clasificación más sencilla pero que engloba todos los formatos de Realidad Aumentada:

- Realidad Aumentada basada en el reconocimiento de formas. La aplicación que ejecuta la RA hace "aparecer" algún elemento (imagen, audio, vídeo o modelos en 3D) cuando la cámara de un dispositivo móvil o de un ordenador reconoce una forma determinada. Estas formas pueden ser de distintos tipos: marcadores, imágenes u objetos.
- Realidad Aumentada basada en el reconocimiento de la posición. Aquí, la información que se añade sobre el escenario real viene condicionada por la posición, orientación e inclinación del dispositivo móvil utilizado. Para ello es imprescindible disponer de un dispositivo móvil de última generación que disponga de GPS, brújula y acelerómetros y conexión a internet. El GPS detecta la posición exacta en la que se encuentra el usuario, la brújula descubre la orientación y los acelerómetros obtienen información de la inclinación del dispositivo móvil. Con toda esta información, se presenta en la pantalla del dispositivo información adicional en forma de objetos 3D, imágenes o indicadores de puntos de interés (POIs), entre otros.

Lens-Fitzgerald (2009), cofundador de Layar, clasifica la RA en niveles de acuerdo a su forma de trabajo, parámetros y técnicas empleadas, distinguiendo cuatro (del 0 al 3):

- Nivel 0 – Hiperenlace con el mundo físico (Códigos QR);
- Nivel 1 – R.A. basada en marcadores.
- Nivel 2 – R.A. markerless (reconocimiento de imágenes u objetos).
- Nivel 3 – Visión aumentada (Smart Glasses).

En principio, a más nivel, mayores son las posibilidades de las aplicaciones (Prendes, 2015). No obstante, es necesario señalar que entre los autores que han abordado estas clasificaciones (Estebanell et al., 2012, Lens-Fitzgerald, 2009, Reinoso 2012, Rice, 2009) no existe un criterio estable en cuanto a los niveles y a las tecnologías que agrupan.

En nuestro caso, nos centraremos en el Nivel 1 de Lens-Fitzgerald, la Realidad Aumentada de PC o escritorio que utiliza el reconocimiento de marcadores, por ser en la que hemos trabajado fundamentalmente con nuestros alumnos. Su funcionamiento se centra en la combinación de la información virtual sincronizada superpuesta sobre el mundo real que se proyectará en la pantalla del ordenador o del aula. La información se capta a través de un dispositivo de entrada, una webcam, a la que se muestran los markers o marcadores, que son los patrones en blanco y negro que indican al sistema donde debe aparecer la imagen virtual creada previamente. El ordenador a través de un software presenta la información asociada y nos permite, girando los marcadores, ver la imagen en 3D desde diferentes ángulos para apreciar mejor todos sus detalles.

En internet podemos encontrar ya algunas aplicaciones de RA para ordenador, móvil, Tablet, consolas, incluso para pizarra digital que nos permiten tanto crear modelos 3D (Trimble Sketchup, Blender o Autodesk 3ds Max), como visualizarlos integrados en objetos digitales educativos (cuadernia o dobook).

III. Nuevas fronteras: Realidad Aumentada y Educación

En los últimos años la Realidad Aumentada se ha convertido en una de las tecnologías emergentes con mayor impacto en la docencia. Ya en 2002 Billinghamurst vaticinaba que la tecnología de la Realidad Aumentada había madurado hasta tal punto que era posible aplicarla en gran variedad de ámbitos y era en educación el área donde esta tecnología podría ser especialmente valiosa. Este anuncio se hacía realidad cuando unos años después, la revista *Time* (2010) la incluía en el cuarto puesto de las tendencias tecnológicas de ese año, y también ese mismo año, la compañía *Gartner Research* la identificaba como una de las diez tecnologías más disruptivas de los últimos años, con una previsión de uso, en torno a 2014, del orden del 30% de los usuarios de dispositivos móviles. En el informe *The 2012 Horizon Report* realizado por Johnson y otros, se revelaba que en cuatro o cinco años ocuparía un lugar destacado entre las tecnologías con mayor impacto en la docencia, el aprendizaje y la investigación creativa.

Junto a estos informes, también podemos encontrar otros estudios que ponen de relieve los beneficios de la RA con fines didácticos, debido a la facilidad que posee para captar la atención del estudiantes al poder crear sistemas de aprendizaje en nuevos entornos virtuales tridimensionales e interactivos, en los que se permite a los alumnos experimentar modelos tangibles de lugares y objetos (García y Pérez, 2010), reforzando el aprendizaje e incrementando la motivación por aprender (Reinoso, 2012). Terán (2012) nos ofrece algunas de las ventajas del uso de la RA en educación como son:

- Desarrollo de habilidades cognitivas, espaciales, perceptivo motoras y temporales en los estudiantes, indistintamente de su edad y nivel académico.
- Reforzamiento de la atención, concentración, memoria inmediata (corto plazo) y memoria mediata (largo plazo) en sus formas visuales y auditivas, así como del razonamiento.
- Activación de procesos cognitivos de aprendizaje. La RA trabaja de forma activa y consciente sobre estos procesos, porque permite confirmar, refutar o ampliar el conocimiento, generar nuevas ideas, sentimientos u opiniones acerca del mundo.
- Formación de actitudes de reflexión al explicar los fenómenos observados o brindar soluciones a problemas específicos.
- Suministra un entorno eficaz de comunicación para el trabajo educativo, porque reduce la incertidumbre del conocimiento acerca de un objeto.
- Aumenta la actitud positiva de los estudiantes ante el aprendizaje, así como su motivación o interés en el tema que se esté abordando, reforzando capacidades y competencias (independencia, iniciativa y principio de la auto-actividad o trabajo independiente).

Podemos añadir otra ventaja destinada a los docentes: la de crear nuestros contenidos digitales educativos propios y contextualizados utilizando esta tecnología, gracias a numerosas aplicaciones distribuidas de forma gratuita para su uso no comercial bajo la licencia pública general GNU como ARToolKit o Aumentaty Author que nos permiten crear, visualizar y manipular modelos 3D de forma rápida y sencilla. Asimismo, existen ya algunos repositorios de escenas de Realidad Aumentada como el desarrollado por el Centro Aragonés de Tecnologías para la Educación (<http://www.catedu.es/webcateduantigua/index.php/descargas/realidad-aumentada>). Y también podemos encontrar un número considerable de aplicaciones, como las presentadas en Portalés (2008), Estebanell y otros (2012), Carracedo y Martínez (2012) y Reinoso (2012). Precisamente, en la publicación de este último autor se examinan seis aplicaciones significativas de la Realidad Aumentada en educación como son: aprendizaje basado en el descubrimiento, desarrollo de

habilidades profesionales, juegos educativos con RA, modelado de objetos 3D, libros con RA y materiales didácticos.

Estos beneficios para alumnos y profesores son defendidos por buena parte de los autores ya citados. Algunos se muestran partidarios decididos de introducir la RA en el aula convencidos por sus potencialidades en dispositivos móviles y la superación de las limitaciones temporales y espaciales en los entornos de aprendizaje (Estebanell et al, 2012). Otros esgrimen sus bondades en cuanto a posibilitar la interacción entre realidad y virtualidad (Billinghurst, 2002), viabilizar determinados contenidos didácticos que no están al alcance de todos y aportar interactividad, juego, experimentación, colaboración, etc. (González, 2013). Del mismo modo son interesantes las aportaciones desde el plano metodológico. Roussou (2004) partiendo de los enfoques "learning through activity" o "learning by doing" y "learning through play" destaca que la RA ayudará al proceso de aprendizaje de los alumnos, sobre todo, por el alto grado de interactividad que proporciona frente a los recursos y métodos tradicionales.

Junto a estas ventajas, también aparecen temores ante su aplicación en las aulas fundamentalmente por dos motivos: su elevado coste económico (Roussou, 2004) -opinión que como desarrollaremos posteriormente, no compartimos-, y lo reaccionaria que ha sido tradicionalmente la educación a los cambios. Reinoso (2012) a pesar de reconocer el enorme potencial de esta tecnología, manifiesta abiertamente sus dudas acerca de la obtención de resultados positivos al introducirla en los centros educativos como un recurso didáctico al uso.

IV. Realidad Aumentada en el aula

La experiencia didáctica que se presenta en esta investigación se ha llevado a cabo durante el primer cuatrimestre del curso 2014/2015 en la asignatura Patrimonio cultural de la mención de Historia, Cultura y Patrimonio de los Grados de Maestro en Educación Infantil y Educación Primaria de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete. En ella se pretende que los alumnos conozcan las posibilidades educativas que les ofrece el patrimonio cultural de Castilla-La Mancha e introducirles en el uso de las herramientas, recursos y aplicaciones didácticas necesarias para enseñar esos contenidos, en su futura práctica docente.

Teniendo en cuenta las competencias de la titulación que la asignatura contribuye a alcanzar, así como, los objetivos y resultados de aprendizaje esperados, el profesor, apoyado por el grupo de investigación "LabinTic. Laboratorio de integración de las TIC en el aula", propuso una actividad práctica obligatoria en la que los estudiantes debían crear sus propios objetos de Realidad Aumentada para favorecer la instrumentación educativa de las manifestaciones culturales y artísticas de su patrimonio cultural más cercano. Es necesario señalar que durante el curso 2013/2014 estudiantes y profesores de esta asignatura ya estuvieron trabajando sobre esta tecnología a modo de estudio exploratorio, analizando las posibilidades de los repositorios de escenas de RA que se pueden encontrar en internet y su integración en el diseño de materiales educativos digitales. Este año, el carácter innovador del proyecto presentado recae sobre el papel activo, autónomo y colaborativo que los alumnos tuvieron en la creación de los recursos, potenciando el aprendizaje significativo y experiencial.

Para virtualizar las escenas de RA sin la necesidad de dibujarlas con programas de 3D se ha utilizado la aplicación Autodesk 123d Catch. Una herramienta gratuita que se puede utilizar desde cualquier dispositivo. Se puede descargar desde su web <http://www.123dapp.com/catch> (disponible para Android, iPhone, iPad y PC) o en las tiendas de aplicaciones de los dispositivos móviles. Su manejo es muy sencillo, incluso al usarla con un móvil o Tablet ofrece un asistente a la hora de hacer las fotografías. Tras captar las imágenes se procede a la generación de los objetos en 3D. Un proceso que no es instantáneo, ya que necesita un tiempo de procesamiento. No obstante, la herramienta cuida mucho la interfaz de usuario y avisa con un mensaje cuando la virtualización 3D del objeto ha finalizado. Además incluye sencillos manuales que guían al usuario en todo el proceso de creación.

Una vez elaborado el objeto en 3D, se puede descargar al ordenador en formato .obj que directamente podemos convertir a escena de RA con aplicaciones distribuidas de forma gratuita para su uso no comercial bajo la licencia pública general GNU como Aumentaty Author o ARToolkit, o importarlo a .dae con Blender, 3DStudio o SketchUp para que se pueda visualizar en aquellas herramientas de creación de objetos digitales educativos -dobook o cuadernia-, que no disponen de un motor 3D (en este caso se realiza a través de flash).

En cuanto al desarrollo de esta experiencia didáctica, en primer lugar, una vez constituidos los grupos de trabajo de entre 3-4 componentes, el profesor facilitó un guion en el que se especificaban las competencias que el alumno debía adquirir, los objetivos que se perseguían, las tareas a realizar, así como material de ayuda y apoyo específico para cada una de las herramientas a utilizar. Toda esta información también se puso a disposición de los estudiantes a través de la plataforma campus virtual de la asignatura para facilitar su acceso en cualquier momento. Seguidamente, los estudiantes comenzaron sus proyectos, bajo la supervisión del profesor, eligiendo las imágenes que iban a virtualizar, ampliando los contenidos relacionados y elaborando sus propios materiales para futuros usos educativos. La mayor parte de los proyectos se centraron en las piezas más representativas de las colecciones arqueológicas del arte ibérico de la provincia de Albacete albergadas en el Museo Provincial, apareciendo también obras de época moderna, como la Cruz de Término y otros monumentos repartidos por la ciudad. Una vez realizado todo el proceso de generación de escenas de RA, anteriormente descrito, en la última sesión, se presentaron y defendieron los resultados. En esta sesión se realizó la evaluación a través de un triple sistema configurado por autoevaluación, coevaluación y evaluación por el profesor.

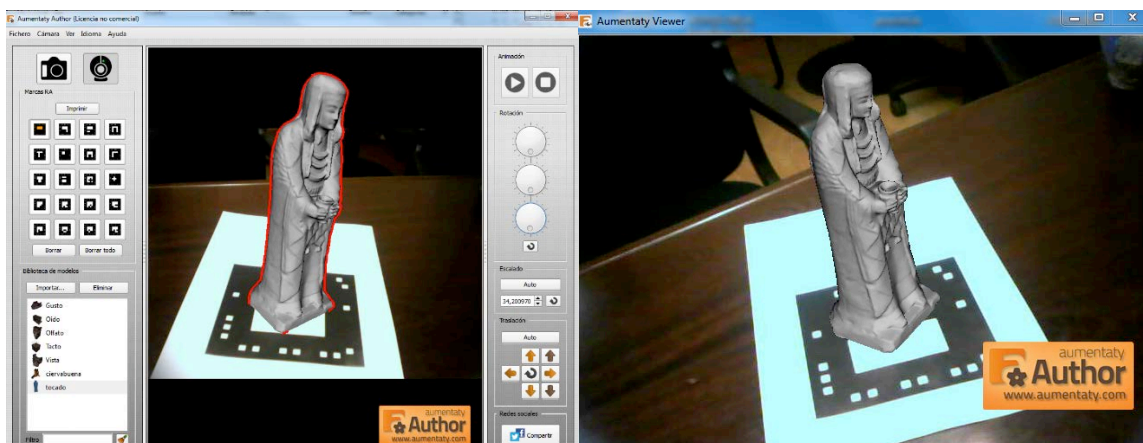


Imagen 1: ejemplo de escena de RA realizada por los alumnos (Dama oferente del Cerro de Los Santos).

A partir de estas premisas, este estudio tiene como principal objetivo conocer el grado de opinión de los estudiantes que han participado en esta experiencia didáctica, sobre la Realidad Aumentada y su aplicación en educación.

V. Método

a. Enfoque y diseño

Para dar respuesta al objetivo de investigación planteado, en este estudio se siguió un enfoque de tipo mixto (cuantitativo y cualitativo). El enfoque cuantitativo trata de descubrir el motivo por el que se suceden los hechos a través de las evidencias observadas, la recopilación de datos y el análisis de los mismos (Cardona, 2002), mientras que el enfoque cualitativo está orientado a analizar la realidad social a través de la categorización de la información y el establecimiento de relaciones de los datos obtenidos (Taylor y Bodgan, 1994). Para conocer el grado de opinión de los participantes se optó por un enfoque mixto, como estrategia exploratoria para tener una visión más amplia del fenómeno abordado. Respecto al enfoque cuantitativo, se utilizó un diseño no experimental descriptivo mediante encuesta, y para el cualitativo, un procedimiento de reducción de datos, categorización y codificación a partir de las respuestas a preguntas abiertas recogidas en el cuestionario.

b. Participantes

La muestra ascendió a 23 participantes (13 mujeres, 56%; 10 varones, 44%) del Grado de Maestro de Infantil (5 estudiantes, 22%) y Primaria (18 estudiantes, 78%) de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. Dado que se trababa de una asignatura, se escogió como muestra a la totalidad de los matriculados en la misma, que se llevó a cabo durante el primer trimestre del curso 2014-15.

Para la medición de las variables estudiadas (grado de opinión sobre la Realidad Aumentada), se administró el cuestionario LabinTic_RA (Cózar, De Moya, Hernández y Hernández, 2014), que disponía de 10 ítems con cinco opciones de respuesta tipo Likert (de *Muy en Desacuerdo* a *Muy de Acuerdo*) y cuatro preguntas abiertas para recoger la información cualitativa. Para el análisis cuantitativo de los datos se calcularon estadísticos descriptivos (media y desviación típica) y la prueba no paramétrica *t* de Student para una muestra ($N < 30$) empleando para ello el paquete informático SPSS versión 19 para Windows. Para el análisis cualitativo, se categorizaron y codificaron las respuestas con el programa ATLAS-ti versión 6 para Windows.

VI. Resultados

En las Tablas 1 y 2 se aportan los resultados correspondientes al análisis cuantitativo de las respuestas de los participantes. En la Tabla 1 se aporta una visión sobre la opinión hacia las TIC aplicadas a la educación y la Tabla 2, de forma más específica, el grado de opinión de los participantes sobre la Realidad Aumentada.

	M	DT	MD	ED	IN	DA	MA
Me gustan las TIC y las uso	4.52	.51	-	-	4	70	26
TIC favorecen la docencia	4.35	.48	-	-	-	65	35
TIC no se usan en el aula	3.83	.93	-	9	26	39	26
TIC ocupan mucho tiempo	2.65	1.01	4	57	13	22	4

Tabla 1: Opinión sobre las TIC aplicadas a la educación
(MD=Muy en Desacuerdo; ED =En Desacuerdo; IN=Indiferente; DA=De Acuerdo; MA=Muy de Acuerdo. Datos expresados en %)

	M	DT	MD	ED	IN	DA	MA
Conocimiento previo de la RA	2.83	1.46	26	22	9	30	13
Es fácil de usar	3.52	.94	4	9	26	52	9
Favorece el proceso de E-A	4.13	.62	-	-	13	61	26
Motiva al alumnado	4.48	.59	-	-	4	44	52
Facilita comprensión contenidos	4.09	.51	-	-	9	74	17
Distrae al alumnado	2.30	.92	17	48	22	13	-
Es una pérdida de tiempo	1.83	1.02	44	44	4	4	4
Necesaria mayor formación	3.43	1.03	-	26	17	44	13
Necesaria para integrar las TIC	3.87	.62	-	-	26	61	13
Mayor utilidad para docentes	2.83	.93	4	35	39	18	4

Tabla 2: Opinión sobre la Realidad Aumentada aplicada a la educación
(MD=Muy en Desacuerdo; ED =En Desacuerdo; IN=Indiferente; DA=De Acuerdo; MA=Muy de Acuerdo. Datos expresados en %)

Tras la realización de la prueba no paramétrica *t* de Student para una muestra ($N < 30$), los resultados revelaron la existencia de cuatro ítems con una respuesta estadísticamente significativa ($p < .05$). Estos ítems fueron: la Realidad Aumentada favorece el aprendizaje ($M = 4.13$; $DT = .62$) ($t = 31.66$; $p = .000$); motiva al alumnado ($M = 4.48$; $DT = .59$) ($t = 36.21$; $p = .000$); facilita la comprensión de contenidos en los centros educativos ($M = 4.09$; $DT = .51$) ($t = 38.08$; $p = .000$); y es una herramienta necesaria para integrar las TIC en el aula ($M = 3.87$; $DT = .62$) ($t = 29.66$; $p = .000$).

En cuanto al análisis cualitativo de los resultados, los datos obtenidos en las respuestas abiertas de los participantes se tradujeron en categorías con el fin de poder realizar comparaciones y posibles contrastes. Así, se establecieron dos categorías: 1) ventajas, y 2) inconvenientes respecto al uso de esta herramienta en las aulas. Siguiendo el procedimiento de diferencial semántico, las respuestas se agruparon dentro de cada categoría en unidades conceptuales significativas para la investigación. Así, en la categoría *ventajas*, el concepto de herramienta "innovadora" obtuvo la mayoría de las respuestas (85%), seguido de "motivadora" (72%), "interesante" (56%), y en menor grado, "útil" y "beneficiosa" (alrededor del 25%). En relación con la segunda categoría, *inconvenientes*, los comentarios se centraron en respuestas como: "La Realidad Aumentada produce distracción y alboroto" (43%), "Hay reticencias para trabajar con esta herramienta" (37%), "Existe un desconocimiento de la herramienta" (32%) o "Es complicada" (22%).

La selección de cinco adjetivos de una lista proporcionada en el cuestionario sobre el uso de la Realidad Aumentada arrojó resultados interesantes para la investigación, ya que la totalidad de los participantes otorgaron una valoración "buena" a esta herramienta, así como consideraba que era "innovadora" (95%), "motivadora" (91%) y "original" (82%). Por el contrario, sólo la mitad de los participantes eligieron el adjetivo "recomendable" (48%) y "dinámica" (43%).

VII. Conclusiones

Los encuestados manifiestan una valoración muy positiva de las TIC en educación en términos de apreciación, uso y utilidad en la docencia. Así, casi la totalidad está de acuerdo o muy de acuerdo al respecto, lo que evidencia una opinión destacada hacia estas herramientas y una necesidad didáctica en su formación inicial, puesto que aunque las utilicen de forma habitual, este hecho no implica que tengan unos conocimientos para su uso educativo. Todos los participantes en el curso coincidieron en que las TIC favorecen la docencia, poniendo de manifiesto que su empleo es un hecho incuestionable en las prácticas pedagógicas actuales.

Respecto a la Realidad Aumentada, el grado de opinión es de acuerdo o muy de acuerdo (aglutina un consenso muy elevado de respuestas) en cuanto a que favorece el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, motiva al alumnado y facilita la comprensión de contenidos. Son muchas las posibilidades que ofrece el uso de la RA para la elaboración de materiales didácticos y actividades de aprendizaje, y, en concreto, tal y como hemos demostrado, a la hora de estudiar y exponer los contenidos relacionados con la Historia e Historia del Arte de nuestro entorno más cercano. Podemos acercar los museos a nuestras aulas, reconstruir emplazamientos históricos, recrear diferentes momentos de la Historia, mostrar monumentos emblemáticos, entre otros muchos recursos, a coste cero.

Los procedimientos utilizados no suponen un esfuerzo excesivo para los docentes, ya que, con ciertas nociones básicas de informática a las que hoy día es relativamente fácil acceder, junto al uso de aplicaciones también gratuitas y de fácil acceso en la red, podemos manipular las escenas de RA que encontramos en los repositorios e incluso crear aquellas que nos interesen. No obstante, somos conscientes que es imprescindible una mayor incidencia en la capacitación y perfeccionamiento en TIC en la formación inicial de los maestros. En este sentido, no es de extrañar que más de la mitad de los encuestados manifieste una necesidad de formación inicial en esta herramienta.

Las respuestas obtenidas desde un planteamiento cualitativo van en línea con la disposición de los encuestados hacia las TIC en educación. Los resultados son satisfactorios por el grado de novedad, implicación, motivación y desafío que la instrumentalización educativa de la RA supone para los estudiantes. Todos han coincidido en señalar que se trata de un buen recurso para presentar y explicar los contenidos curriculares de Ciencias Sociales de manera atractiva, innovadora y motivadora en cualquier nivel educativo, destacando las numerosas alternativas que aporta para favorecer un aprendizaje interactivo en los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje y que han experimentado por sí mismos. Si bien, existen algunas reticencias hacia la RA derivada de una falta de conocimiento y de una integración en el aula como recurso TIC de primer orden. No obstante, consideramos que es cuestión de tiempo la inclusión de esta tecnología en las aulas a través de

diferentes recursos como los Ar-Books, MagicBook o WonderBooks, iPads, Tablets o cascos y gafas de Realidad Aumentada.

Todavía faltan estudios y experiencias que sirvan como punto de partida para demostrar ampliamente los beneficios didácticos de la RA destacando cuál es el nivel más adecuado para conseguir mejores resultados dependiendo de los contenidos a tratar, del nivel del alumnado o del grado de conocimiento y uso que hacen de las TIC en general.

Es positivo ser innovador, incorporar las novedades a nuestras aulas, pero sin perder de vista que la mera incorporación de lo novedoso no lleva parejo el éxito del proceso educativo. Es preciso tener en cuenta a qué tipo de alumnado nos dirigimos y qué objetivos concretos son los que pretendemos alcanzar al introducir en nuestra docencia estos elementos virtuales, para que no dejen de ser un medio y se conviertan en el fin. Para ello, es conveniente que las innovaciones tecnológicas se introduzcan en las aulas junto a un planteamiento didáctico y disciplinar adecuado. Es nuestra responsabilidad como docentes formar a nuestros alumnos en el uso pedagógico y disciplinar de estas tecnologías emergentes, para que se enfrenten en igualdad de condiciones a sus alumnos en su futura práctica docente.

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Plataforma educativa ZERA: modelo de adaptación de contenidos sensible al contexto

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Resumen

El creciente auge de las tecnologías móviles y su incorporación en la educación han provocado un impactado en los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje, dando lugar a un nuevo paradigma denominado m-learning. Debido a la diversidad de dispositivos móviles, la mayoría de los recursos educativos diseñados para estaciones de trabajo convencionales no son apropiados para redes de ancho de banda pequeño y dispositivos con limitación de recursos y procesamiento, afectado además por la diversidad de dispositivos. La adaptación de contenidos a las capacidades de los dispositivos es una técnica muy utilizada en los últimos años. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo realizar una revisión del estado del arte en cuanto a la adaptación de contenidos según el contexto de los usuarios. Se describen las principales técnicas de inteligencia artificial aplicadas en este campo, profundizando en algoritmos para crear contenidos adaptados al contexto de los estudiantes de forma dinámica. Se concluye con la representación de un modelo personalizado a la plataforma educativa ZERA, desarrollada en la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas. El modelo propone dos capas de adaptación e incorpora un motor de adaptación ajustado a las 30 tipologías de recursos gestionados en la plataforma ZERA, la adaptación tiene en cuenta las preferencias de los usuarios, el contexto del usuario y los contenidos ajustados al estilo de aprendizaje del estudiante. Este proceso permite que ZERA pueda incorporarse al paradigma m-learning.

Palabras clave

M-learning, adaptación de contenidos, adaptación sensible al contexto

Educative platform ZERA: adaptation model context-aware content

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Abstract

The increasing rise of mobile technologies and their incorporation in education have caused an impact on the teaching and learning, leading to a new paradigm called m-learning. Because of the diversity of mobile devices, most educational resources designed for conventional work stations are not appropriate for networks and small bandwidth devices with limited resources and processing also affect the diversity of devices. The adaptation of content to the capabilities of the devices is a widely used technique in recent years. This paper aims to conduct a review of the state of the art regarding the adaptation of content according to the user context. The main artificial intelligence techniques applied in this field are described, deepening algorithms to create content tailored to the context of students dynamically. It concludes with the representation of a custom model to ZERA educational platform, developed at the University of Information Sciences. The model proposes two adaptation layers and incorporates an adaptive engine fitted to the 30 types of managed in ZERA platform, adaptation takes into account user preferences, user context and content adjusted to the learning style student. This process allows ZERA can join the m-learning paradigm.

Keywords

M-learning, content adaptation, context-aware content

I. Introducción

Las tecnologías móviles ofrecen nuevas oportunidades para el aprendizaje, extendiéndolo más allá de la tradicional "aula de clases". Los avances en los dispositivos móviles y las tecnologías inalámbricas han impactado en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje, este ha sabido aprovechar estos cambios dando lugar al aprendizaje móvil (m-learning).

En relación al término m-learning existe un amplio debate entre los investigadores (Pinkwart, Hoppe, Milrad, & Perez, 2003), (Tsvetozar Georgiev, Georgieva, & Smrikarov, 2004), (Traxler, 2005), (T. Georgiev, Georgieva, & Trajkovski, 2006), (Caudill, 2007), entre otros. Los debates se centran principalmente en si el m-learning es el siguiente paso del e-learning, o si es una herramienta avanzada que se integra con el e-learning; en cualquiera de los casos es considerado un nuevo componente que ha surgido para apoyar la educación a distancia.

Las Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones (TIC) y su influencia en la educación, han creado herramientas y plataformas educativas que apoyan y facilitan el seguimiento del proceso enseñanza - aprendizaje como son: Content Management Systems (CMS), Learning Management Systems (LMS), Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS), repositorios de recursos educativos, herramientas de autor, entre otras.

Debido a la diversidad de dispositivos móviles, la mayoría de los recursos educativos diseñados para las plataformas educativas, computadores convencionales y alta velocidad de conexión, no son apropiados para redes de ancho de banda pequeño y dispositivos con limitación de recursos y procesamiento. Esto hace necesaria la adaptación de los contenidos (adaptive content delivery). (Zhao, 2010) define que el proceso de adaptación de contenidos es la acción de transformarlos y adaptarlos a las capacidades de los dispositivos. La adaptación es aplicada principalmente a dispositivos móviles, estos requieren un trato especial debido a las limitaciones de procesamiento, tamaño de pantalla y las distintas formas de entradas de datos.

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo realizar una revisión del estado del arte en cuanto a la adaptación de contenidos según el contexto de los usuarios. Se describen las principales técnicas de inteligencia artificial aplicadas en este campo, profundizando en algoritmos para crear contenidos adaptados al contexto de los estudiantes de forma dinámica. Se concluye con la representación de un modelo personalizado a la plataforma educativa ZERA, desarrollada en la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas.

II. Adaptación en el e-learning

La adaptación en el e-learning surge de la idea de que no hay un único estilo de aprendizaje que se ajuste a todos los tipos de estudiantes y a sus formas de aprendizaje. Dos enfoques se han introducido en esta área y el desafío de los sistemas adaptativos es el equilibrio entre estas dos diferentes formas de adaptación (Yaghmaie & Bahreininejad, 2011): (1) adaptabilidad, que se refiere a la medida en que el sistema cambia basado en un cierto conocimiento sobre el estudiante y (2) la capacidad de adaptación, que es cómo el sistema se adapta en respuesta al contexto donde se encuentre el usuario. El primero es controlado por el sistema, mientras que el último es controlado por los estudiantes.

En la actualidad, el éxito de los sistemas de adaptación e-learning se ve en la prestación eficiente de los cursos por medio de técnicas avanzadas de personalización. Además, expertos de diferentes disciplinas de investigación coinciden en que la personalización es necesaria en entornos e-learning (Barrios, 2007): *"en las nuevas formas de enseñanza y paradigmas de aprendizaje los diferentes objetivos de aprendizaje requieren diferentes enfoques didácticos"*. Por lo tanto se puede decir que uno de los principales problemas técnicos de la adaptación en el e-learning es: ¿cómo lograr una adaptación que aunque cambie el enfoque didáctico de los contenidos logre los resultados esperados para los que estos fueron creados?

III. Adaptación de contenidos

En los modelos de adaptación de contenidos existen dos elementos fundamentales: los usuarios y los contenidos educativos (Gómez, Huerva, Mejía, Baldiris, & Fabregat, 2009). Es muy importante tener estos contenidos adaptado al contexto de los usuarios. (Dey, 2001) Define al contexto como: *"cualquier información que pueda ser usada para caracterizar la situación de una entidad, una entidad es una persona, lugar u objeto que sea considerado relevante en la interacción del usuario con la aplicación, incluye el lugar, tiempo, actividades y las preferencias de cada entidad"*. Para lograr esto es necesaria una serie de variables importantes. La inclusión del contexto en el momento de mostrarle a los usuarios (estudiantes y profesores) el contenido de los cursos diseñados en alguna plataforma educativa crea un nuevo modelo conocido como "adaptación sensible al contexto" (context-aware adaptation).

Un sistema es sensible al contexto si es capaz de usar la información que rodea al usuario para brindarle una mejor experiencia de trabajo, en el caso de una plataforma educativa se puede decir que es "sensible al contexto" si adapta los cursos, contenidos y recursos que este tenga a las condiciones del estudiante o/y profesor, permitiéndole un aprendizaje óptimo.

En el caso de la adaptación de contenidos realizada para llevar los cursos de las plataformas educativas a dispositivos móviles como parte del contexto hay que tener en cuenta: las limitaciones de procesamiento, tamaño de pantalla, las distintas formas de entradas de datos, los tipos de ficheros que permite, el sistema operativo que usa y los sensores. Por lo tanto, conociendo el contexto de los estudiantes y proveyendo los recursos educativos ideales en función de estos mejorará la eficiencia del m-learning.

Es importante destacar que la adaptación se puede realizar en varios niveles (M, 2012): adaptación a nivel de presentación, adaptación a nivel de contenido y la creación de la ruta de aprendizaje adaptativo.

IV. Técnicas para la adaptación de contenidos

Una forma de llevar a cabo la adaptación de contenidos y lograr a su vez una mayor satisfacción por parte de los usuarios es la creación de diferentes contextualizaciones de los contenidos según el tipo de usuario, su contexto y sus preferencias, pero es conocido los altos costos que implica el diseño de recursos educativos, de ahí que tener diferentes versiones de los mismos resulte complejo.

En el campo de la inteligencia artificial existen alternativas que brindan grandes beneficios en estos procesos de adaptar los contenidos según las preferencias de los usuarios, tal es el caso del uso de: redes neuronales (Schalkoff, 1997), minería de datos (Fayyad, Piatetsky-shapiro, & Smyth, 1996) y reconocimiento de patrones (Luis & Calonge Cano, 2011).

En la literatura existen varios casos interesantes que usan "optimización basada en colonias de hormigas". (M, 2012) Utiliza esta técnica para lograr alcanzar un camino óptimo de aprendizaje adaptativo reduciendo la sobrecarga cognitiva, así como la desorientación de los estudiantes. Además plantean que los atributos de los recursos educativos, junto con las características del estudiante, mejora la prestación de la mayoría de los recursos.

Para mejorar la capacidad de adaptación (M, 2012) plantea la importancia de añadir las características del estudiante. Para ello se propone como atributo de la hormiga la combinación del modelo de estilo de aprendizaje de Kolb (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), el nivel de conocimiento del estudiante y sus preferencias con los atributos de los objetos de aprendizaje, esto hará el sistema de aprendizaje más adaptable a los estudiantes de manera individual.

En (Sargsyan, Hovakimyan, & Barkhudaryan, 2011) se plantea el uso de un "algoritmo genético" para resolver el problema de la gestión óptima del proceso de enseñanza en los sistemas de e-learning, plantean la construcción de una herramienta que adapta los materiales de enseñanza para un usuario, lo que permitirá al estudiante obtener los conocimientos de manera efectiva.

Los agentes inteligentes tienen un protagonismo en este campo, un ejemplo de esto es el denominado "Learning Assistant" que según (Kwasnicka, Szul, Markowska-Kaczmar, & Myszkowski, 2008) es capaz de definir diferentes caminos de aprendizaje en un sistema e-learning para diferentes estudiantes. Este agente es capaz de inferir utilizando los metadatos que describen a los estudiantes y los materiales didácticos. Se utiliza una red neuronal para agrupar a los estudiantes similares, además se expone como se debe hacer la personalización considerando las características individuales y de los grupos similares de estudiantes.

Existen estrategias para la adaptación de contenidos en plataformas educativas, enunciadas en (MobiForge, 2009): One Size Fits All, Minor Adaptation, Redirection y Unified. Según la estrategia utilizada la adaptación puede ser estática o dinámica (Rho, Cho, & Hwang, 2005). Si la adaptación del contenido es estática, el servidor analiza la petición y devuelve los contenidos que este ya tenga pre-adaptados (Chang et al., 2008), de lo contrario si la adaptación es dinámica esta se realiza en el momento en que la petición llega al servidor, devolviendo lo contenidos adaptados a las características del dispositivo (Lum & Lau, 2003) (Sharples, 2006).

También existen estrategias para crear sistemas adaptativos que personalizan el contenido de estos teniendo en cuenta los dispositivos móviles y sus características, tal es el caso de (Zhao, Anma, Ninomiya, & Okamoto, 2008) que presenta una arquitectura funcional para la adaptación de contenidos, así como algoritmos para crear contenidos adaptados al contexto de los estudiantes de forma dinámica. También se puede encontrar en (Rho, et al., 2005) una arquitectura, un motor de adaptación y un prototipo funcional para mostrar el contenido multimedia de manera adaptativa asegurando la calidad en su entrega a través de conexiones alámbricas e inalámbricas

Todas estas técnicas combinadas a soluciones algorítmicas existentes para adaptar los contenidos a dispositivos móviles, en dependencia del tipo de dispositivo, permiten dar un salto en el aprendizaje a distancia y sobre todo en el m-learning, poniendo a disposición de profesores y estudiantes herramientas que pueden ser utilizadas en cualquier momento y lugar. Esto es un ejemplo fiel a la definición de educación a distancia, solo que deben ser incorporados aspectos pedagógicos y didácticos novedosos que realmente aproveche las facilidades que brindan las tecnologías.

V. Modelo adaptación de contenidos para la plataforma educativa ZERA

La plataforma educativa ZERA se encuentra en la versión 1.0, es un LCMS creado en la Universidad de las Ciencias Informáticas, entre las características que hacen de esta plataforma única se tiene: que es basada en hiper-entornos de aprendizajes; permite la creación de cursos con una estructura capitular donde el contenido se muestra con la estructura de un libro: avance del contenido (marcador de libro), resaltado, apuntes al contenido; creación de 30 tipos de recursos y 11 tipologías de ejercicios; soporte para las especificaciones IMS-QTI y SCORM; incorpora las sugerencias de uso y registro de avance; la evaluación por rúbricas y por competencias; atención diferenciada (recorridos dirigidos, softareas, orientaciones de trabajos); sistema distribuido ideal para instituciones con problemas de conectividad y los procesos comunes de la gestión académica y herramientas de comunicación fórum, chat, entre otras funcionalidades.

ZERA debido a sus características puede ser utilizada tanto en Cuba como en otros países. Sin embargo, en su concepción no se tuvo en cuenta la adaptabilidad de sus contenidos, ni su uso en un entorno m-learning, por lo que se hace necesario incluir en las futuras versiones una arquitectura que provea a esta plataforma de una adaptación de los contenidos sensible al contexto de cada usuario, sobre todo de los usuarios que se conecten con dispositivos móviles.

Se propone desarrollar las tres capas de adaptación enunciadas en (M, 2012) e incidir en la capa de presentación y en la capa de contenidos en la plataforma educativa ZERA. En el caso de la capa de presentación se utilizará una estrategia de One Size Fits All, en esta capa se cambiará el diseño y los componentes visuales para que desde computadoras de escritorio como de dispositivos móviles se tenga la misma experiencia de usuario, esto implica cambiar las tecnologías, lenguajes y requerimientos del lado del cliente.

En la versión actual se usa como tecnologías y lenguajes del lado del cliente: XHTML (W3C, 2010), JQuery 1.5 (Bibeault, Katz, & Rosa, 2014) y el framework de CSS Blueprint 1.0 (Blueprint, 2011). La propuesta de cambios para la capa de presentación consiste en usar HTML5 (W3C, 2014), JQuery 1.9 y el cambio más importante estaría en el uso del framework de CSS Twitter Bootstrap 2.3 (Otto & Jacob, 2013), esto permite crear diseños adaptativos que junto al uso de media queries (W3C, 2012) se logra que la plataforma se visualice correctamente desde cualquier navegador web y dispositivo. Los cambios en esta capa aunque ayudan en la visualización de los contenidos y recursos de la plataforma no los adaptan al contexto de los usuarios, por lo que es necesario un cambio en su arquitectura.

Para lograr la adaptación en la capa de contenidos se propone usar una adaptación dinámica del lado del servidor, cuando la petición de un contenido se realice al servidor este analizará el

contexto de la petición y junto a los cambios realizados en la capa de presentación devolverá a los clientes (usuarios) los contenidos adaptados. La propuesta de adaptación consiste en darle a la capa de negocio de la plataforma la responsabilidad de mediar y tomar la responsabilidad de pasarle los datos de entrada al motor de adaptación, estos datos de entradas están formados por: las preferencias del usuario, los contenidos a adaptar y el contexto del usuario.

- *Preferencias de los usuarios:* está dado por configuraciones previas que ha realizado el estudiante en su proceso de registro y a un test que este realiza al entrar al sistema por primera vez, algunos de estos datos están relacionados con notificaciones preferidas y sistemas de mensajería; además el sistema según el estudiante interactúa con este registra su ritmo de aprendizaje, temas dominados y temas por dominar, gustos, interacciones sociales, comportamiento y motivaciones.
- *Contenidos a adaptar:* para la selección de los contenidos a adaptar se tiene en cuenta un Modelo para la Planificación Inteligente de Contenidos (MPIC) basado en la secuenciación del currículum mediante un algoritmo de optimización de colonias de hormigas. El objetivo de este modelo es la planificación inteligente de recursos educativos teniendo en cuenta las preferencias del estudiante y sus características. Este modelo se basa en el test realizado previamente que permite determinar las características de cada estudiante y también tiene en cuenta sus resultados en actividades de aprendizaje desarrolladas según interactúa con la plataforma. Este modelo es el resultado de una investigación doctoral que se encuentra en desarrollo y que se ajusta a la plataforma educativa ZERA, pero desarrollado por la autora Lisandra Guibert Estrada durante el presente año, por lo que no será tratado en este artículo. La salida de este modelo provee la ruta de aprendizaje personalizada del estudiante y los contenidos que se ajustan al tipo de aprendizaje del estudiante que serán la entrada a al motor de adaptación de contenidos para adaptarlos al contexto del usuario.
- *Contexto:* está dado por las características de cada dispositivo: las limitaciones de procesamiento, tamaño de pantalla, las distintas formas de entradas de datos, los tipos de ficheros que permite, el sistema operativo que usa y los sensores.

En el caso de que ya existan guardados en memoria los contenidos adaptados para una petición se devolverán estos y no se tendrá que ejecutar el proceso de adaptación, la respuesta del motor de adaptación será enviada a la capa de negocio, esta a su vez a la capa de presentación o de servicio y de esta al usuario. Cuando se plantea el acceso desde un dispositivo móvil se refiere a una aplicación nativa denominada XauceMovil perteneciente a la plataforma ZERA y desde un navegador web puede ser desde cualquier dispositivo que posea esta aplicación (navegador web). Para una mejor comprensión ver la figura 1.

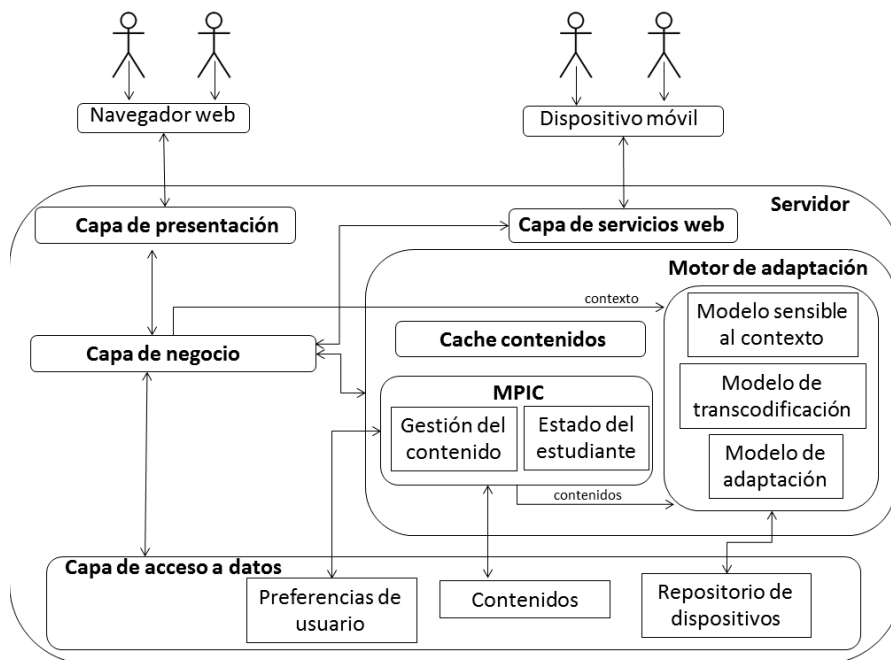


Figura 1. Arquitectura para la adaptación de contenidos sensible al contexto en ZERA

Para la creación del motor de adaptación se tiene las bases de la arquitectura desarrollada por (Zhao, 2010). Esta arquitectura provee los algoritmos y métodos para adaptar 4 tipos de recursos: texto, imagen, audio y video; sin embargo la plataforma educativa ZERA gestiona 30 tipos de recursos (incluye los 4 anteriores) por lo que hay que agregar los algoritmos y modificaciones necesarias al motor de adaptación de (Zhao, 2010) que permitan la adaptación de los 26 tipos de recursos restantes.

La inclusión de este proceso en ZERA permitirá que los contenidos almacenados se le visualicen al estudiante en cualquier tipo de dispositivo y a la vez teniendo en cuenta sus preferencias y estilos de aprendizaje.

VI. Conclusiones

El análisis del estado del arte desarrollado en el presente artículo permitió arribar a las siguientes conclusiones:

1. La adaptación de contenidos es una rama de la ciencia en el campo de las tecnologías móviles, que aparejado a la diversidad de dispositivos de este tipo, tienen un alto impacto en las investigaciones relacionadas con el campo de la ubicuidad en la educación.
2. Las técnicas de inteligencia artificial como: optimización por colonias de hormigas, algoritmos genéticos y agentes inteligentes son de amplia utilización en la adaptación de contenidos para dispositivos móviles.
3. El diseño de un modelo de adaptación de contenidos ajustado al contexto de los usuarios de forma dinámica, personalizado a la plataforma educativa ZERA, utilizando un motor de adaptación de contenidos ajustado a las 30 tipologías de recursos educativos de la plataforma, permite su inclusión en el paradigma m-learning, con posibilidades de brindar cursos a distancia a través de las tecnologías emergentes.

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Implementación de los Planes de Mejora en el Contexto de la Ley Subvención Escolar Preferencial (Sep)

Utilización de Estrategias y Recursos Didácticos Incorporados en el Plan de Mejoramiento en las Asignaturas de Lenguaje y Matemática en una Escuela Municipal de Punta Arenas

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Resumen

El acceso a los recursos didácticos y la forma cómo estos recursos se aplican en el aula a las distintas experiencias de aprendizaje escolar proporcionan evidencias para mejorar las prácticas pedagógicas en el aula. Este estudio exploratorio buscó, en un sentido amplio, identificar los recursos didácticos que se han adquirido a través de la Ley SEP y que han sido incorporados en el plan de mejoramiento, como también las estrategias metodológicas utilizadas por los docentes. Para ello, se utilizaron los siguientes instrumentos para recolectar información, cuestionarios, grupo focal, tanto para docentes como directivos y entrevistas al equipo directivo. Los resultados del estudio revelan el conocimiento y la implementación permanente de los recursos didácticos, particularmente, de la pizarra digital interactiva. Asimismo, la variedad de estrategias metodológicas son apropiadas a las necesidades e intereses de los educandos y se implementan habitualmente en el aula de una escuela municipal de Punta Arenas.

Palabras clave

Ley SEP, Recursos didácticos, Estrategias metodológicas, Plan de Mejoramiento, Pizarra Digital Interactiva

Implementation of Improvement Plans in the Context of the Preferential School Subsidy Law (PSS Law)

Utilization of Strategies and Didactic Resources incorporated in the Improvement Plan in the subjects of Language and Mathematics in a Municipal School in Punta Arenas

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Abstract

The access to the didactic resources and how these resources are applied to the different learning experiences in the classroom, provide evidence to improve educational practices at school. In a broad sense, this exploratory study attempted to identify the educational resources, that have been acquired through the PSS Law and have also been incorporated in the improvement plan, as well as the methodological strategies used by teachers. To this end, the following instruments were used to collect information, questionnaires and focus group, both for teachers and headmasters and interviews with the school leadership team. The results of the study reveal the knowledge and permanent implementation of didactic resources, in particular, of the interactive whiteboard. Similarly, the variety of methodological strategies is appropriate to the needs and interests of learners and is usually implemented in the classroom of a municipal school in Punta Arenas.

Keywords

PSS Law, Didactic Resources, Methodological Strategies, Improvement Plan, Interactive Whiteboard

I. Introducción

La presente investigación se desarrolló en la comuna de Punta Arenas, Región de Magallanes y Antártica Chilena (XII región), donde se ubica la Corporación Municipal de Punta Arenas, institución que administra el sistema educativo municipal y que actualmente atiende a un 55,44% de la población total en edad escolar. La Corporación cuenta con 19 escuelas de educación básica (100%) adscritas a la Ley SEP. No obstante, el restante 44,56% se distribuye entre la educación particular subvencionada y particular pagada.

Por lo anteriormente expuesto, esta investigación se enmarca en el área de Gestión Curricular, fundamentalmente en el ámbito de Planificación de la Enseñanza, puesto que pretende identificar los recursos didácticos que se han adquirido a través de la Ley Subvención Escolar Preferencial y que han sido incorporados en el Plan de Mejoramiento, desde la percepción de sus propios actores –directivos, docentes, alumnos y apoderados. De la misma forma, se espera establecer su pertinencia con las estrategias metodológicas más utilizadas por los docentes en las asignaturas de Lenguaje y Matemática de la escuela de la comuna de Punta Arenas.

La importancia de llevar a cabo una investigación en el ámbito de la metodología educacional teniendo como base el conocimiento de las estrategias metodológicas y los recursos de aprendizaje que se utilizan en el establecimiento responde, esencialmente, a la necesidad de la escuela de obtener un insumo para la toma de decisiones en el área de gestión curricular.

La metodología del estudio combina técnicas cuantitativas como cualitativas. Inicialmente se aplica una encuesta para conocer la percepción a docentes, directivos, estudiantes y apoderados. En términos cualitativos se incluyen entrevistas y grupos focales con la finalidad de profundizar en los datos obtenidos a través de la encuesta.

La investigación se plantea con la finalidad de obtener información acerca de la forma cómo se utilizan estos recursos en los procesos de aprendizajes. Adicionalmente se integrará como insumo a la evaluación global de la implementación del plan de mejoramiento.

II. Contexto teórico a partir del cual se aborda el problema

La presente investigación se centra en dos ámbitos del modelo de gestión de la Ley SEP, que forman parte del Plan de Mejoramiento Educativo 2008 – 2012 (PME), de una escuela municipal en Punta Arenas; En relación a los recursos utilizados y como se utilizan, esto es:

- Gestión Curricular: Contempla diseño, implementación y evaluación de su propuesta curricular. Hace hincapié en medir los avances en el aprendizaje de los alumnos, mejorar las estrategias de enseñanza y apoyar la gestión docente en el aula. Las acciones comprometidas apuntan a una sustentabilidad de la propuesta y estar alineadas al Modelo de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Gestión Escolar.
- Gestión de Recursos: Los lineamientos en esta área se centran en la organización y la optimización de los recursos con que cuenta el establecimiento. Además de tener presente el desarrollo profesional de los docentes, y asistentes de la educación.

a. Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial

Diversos estudios han planteado que entre los variados problemas evidenciados en nuestro sistema educacional, se destaca la administración y distribución de recursos a los establecimientos educacionales subvencionados. Además se establece una distinción entre necesidades de los estudiantes con respecto a la situación económica y a su capital cultural de origen, acentuando la estratificación del sistema escolar. "Es suficientemente extendida la evidencia que demuestra que un niño o joven proveniente de hogares de menores recursos tiene, en promedio, un rendimiento educativo inferior a un estudiante de hogares de mayores recursos. Este resultado es independiente, en principio, de la calidad del establecimiento"(Beyer, 2008: 185). Para solucionar esta problemática surge la Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial (Ley Nº20.248), más conocida por su sigla como "Ley SEP", que busca compensar las desigualdades educativas e implica una inversión significativa de recursos financieros, sobre todo para los establecimientos educacionales que cuentan con un número alto de estudiantes vulnerables en sus aulas. Esta experiencia innovadora en términos del sistema de financiamiento tiene como objetivo mejorar la calidad de la educación en los establecimientos subvencionados, básicamente a través de la entrega de una subvención adicional a estudiantes identificados como prioritarios.

La decisión de asignar recursos adicionales a la subvención SEP se sustenta en los siguientes principios:

- Todos los alumnos pueden alcanzar altos niveles de aprendizaje. No obstante, en los niños de estratos socioeconómicos bajos es más difícil, por lo que debe existir un financiamiento diferenciado según el nivel socioeconómico de los alumnos.
- Los incentivos son importantes. Deben existir apoyo y sanciones hacia aquellos establecimientos que no logran los resultados esperados.
- Recursos orientados al logro de los aprendizajes a través de los Planes de Mejoramiento Educativo (PME).

Uno de los elementos más importantes de la Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial lo constituye la obligatoriedad de diseñar e implementar un plan de mejoramiento poniendo énfasis en un liderazgo pedagógico, en base a un diagnóstico institucional de la situación inicial. Este plan de mejoramiento cuenta con recursos económicos asignados en forma estratégica, siendo este un aspecto clave y motivador para alcanzar las metas educativas. Además, tiene como objetivo operacionalizar una estrategia de desarrollo orientado al establecimiento educacional, a un mejoramiento continuo, con una duración de cuatro años, para lograr las metas propuestas.

Además la Ley SEP introduce cambios significativos en cuanto a la relación MINEDUC y establecimientos educativos, siendo los más relevantes: (i) la magnitud sin precedentes del aumento de los recursos de libre disponibilidad que se inyectan en el sistema educativo; (ii) la descentralización de las decisiones más críticas respecto de las acciones para mejorar los procesos y resultados, dando facultades a las escuelas y a los sostenedores; (iii) la institucionalización de la asistencia técnica proporcionada por personas o agencias externas al sistema educativo como política de gobierno para el mejoramiento educativo en las escuelas y (iv) la introducción de mecanismos de rendición de cuentas mediante el establecimiento de metas y -lo que es más importante por su novedad en el sistema educativo chileno- la definición de consecuencias por el incumplimiento de los compromisos(Viola Espínola & Silva, 2009). La Ley SEP da a los

establecimientos educacionales una mayor autonomía, respetando los principios de calidad y equidad, en un contexto de mejoramiento continuo donde las instituciones se responsabilizan por sus resultados.

En primera instancia, el Ministerio de Educación invita a los establecimientos educacionales a participar en la Ley Sep. Una vez confirmada su participación, el Ministerio de Educación clasifica las escuelas en tres categorías:

- *Autónomas*: Aquéllas que han mostrado sistemáticamente buenos resultados educativos en la prueba Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación, en las tres últimas mediciones dentro de su grupo socioeconómico.
- *Emergentes*: Aquéllas que no han mostrado sistemáticamente buenos resultados educativos. Tienen un puntaje SIMCE promedio por debajo de la media de su mismo grupo socioeconómico.
- *En Recuperación*: Aquéllas que han mostrado resultados educativos reiteradamente deficientes. Un SIMCE por debajo de los 220 puntos. También se clasifican en esta categoría las escuelas emergentes que no cuenten con el PM-SEP dentro del plazo de 1 año y aquéllas que, teniendo su plan aprobado, no lo apliquen. (Guía Ayuda Mineduc, según Decreto N° 293, Julio 2011)

Esta clasificación es clave para focalizar los sistemas de apoyo hacia las escuelas según su clasificación. Para realizar esta gran tarea, es importante contar con docentes comprometidos y competentes; en esencia lo importante es "la cultura de organización para promover la mejora" (Ainscow & West, 2008:40) creando un ambiente donde los profesores atiendan de buena manera las sugerencias para la mejora de su establecimiento y sientan que los conocimientos e ideas presentes en la organización, son la base de los procesos de mejora que van a llevar adelante.

De esta forma, la Ley SEP implica un cambio radical en la gestión de los diferentes actores. Se les entrega a los sostenedores y establecimientos mayor autonomía en la gestión de los recursos y se insta a los establecimientos a responsabilizarse por los resultados de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. El trabajo, en este nuevo escenario se enfoca en las áreas curriculares de mayor déficit, como por ejemplo: Lenguaje y Matemáticas. Esto es coincidente con investigaciones que "giran en torno a un foco continuo en la docencia nuclear, primero en la lectoescritura y luego en las matemáticas; grandes inversiones en el desarrollo profesional de profesores y directores, muy orientado a aspectos fundamentales de la práctica docente en aula; una rendición de cuentas explícita y exigente por la calidad de la práctica docente y el nivel de desempeño de los alumnos, respaldada por una supervisión directa de las prácticas docentes en aula por parte de los directores y el personal del distrito; y un clima normativo en el que los adultos se hacen responsables por su propio aprendizaje, el de sus colegas y de sus estudiantes" (Elmore, 2010:135).

Así, tanto las prácticas pedagógicas como de gestión, tienen que focalizarse en crear, desarrollar e implementar instancias de trabajo y aprendizaje colaborativo; donde profesores y directivos se involucren de manera sistemática en el análisis, monitoreo y comprensión de lo que sucede con las prácticas en el aula, como también en la institución.

b. Política de Mejoramiento Educativo

En este punto llama la atención que, a pesar de los esfuerzos y de la inversión realizada en la última década en Chile, los resultados de la enseñanza primaria aún son deficientes. Lo anterior es complejo, ya que se han destinado importantes recursos al sistema educativo, como también grandes reformas se han implementado en el sector. Sin embargo, los indicadores de rendimiento se han mantenido prácticamente inalterados. Entonces “¿Por qué a pesar de todos los esfuerzos e inversiones realizadas, el sistema educativo no ha logrado constituirse en una fuente de desarrollo y de distribución equitativa de las oportunidades?” (Raczynsky & Muñoz, 2007:1). Por el contrario, el origen socioeconómico y el capital cultural siguen siendo predictores en los resultados de evaluaciones estandarizadas como el SIMCE.

De esta manera, el Ministerio de Educación está haciendo un esfuerzo sostenido en todo el sistema escolar para consolidar los procesos de gestión al interior de los establecimientos escolares subvencionados. Es así, que considerando su experiencia y las investigaciones realizadas en el campo de la gestión escolar, se ha desarrollado el Modelo de Calidad de la Gestión Escolar, el que apunta a generar las capacidades necesarias para que cada escuela se transforme en un centro efectivo y de calidad, a partir de su propia identidad, asumiendo que cambiar las prácticas de docentes y/o de directivos no es simple y no pasa por la voluntad de los actores, sino por las capacidades que ellos tienen, las que muchas veces deben ser creadas e instaladas. El aseguramiento de la calidad, se ha materializado, por ejemplo, en el ámbito de la educación superior, a través de los programas de acreditación, en el ámbito docente con el “Marco para la Buena Enseñanza”, en lo referido al desempeño de los directivos docentes con el “Marco para la Buena Dirección” y en el ámbito de la gestión institucional escolar a través del “Sistema de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Gestión Escolar”, que se desarrolla en torno a un modelo de calidad.

En este contexto, el plan de mejora por si mismo, no asegura el cambio ni el mejoramiento, ya que “el cambio en educación es fácil de proponer, complicado de llevar a la práctica y extraordinariamente difícil de sostener” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008: 7), pero el plan lo encauza. Además, hay que tener presente que las estrategias de mejoramiento que son efectivas para algunas escuelas no lo son para otras. Las instituciones educativas progresan a ritmos diferentes. De ahí “la importancia de concebir estrategias diferenciadas de mejoramiento de las escuelas” (Hopkins & Higham, 2008: 107). Por tal motivo, es fundamental un buen liderazgo en la escuela para hacer sostenible los procesos de mejora.

El plan de mejoramiento pone énfasis en el liderazgo pedagógico y en una mayor autonomía de los establecimientos respetando los principios de calidad y equidad, a través del cual se intenciona la gestión hacia una cultura del mejoramiento continuo y una responsabilidad por los resultados de la organización – escuela. Lo fundamental del plan de mejora es que responda a la diversidad del alumnado. En otras palabras, se orienta a tener un sistema educativo inclusivo, generando una vinculación más estrecha entre los esfuerzos de mejora institucional y los resultados de aprendizaje en el aula.

c. Estrategias Metodológicas

Las estrategias metodológicas constituyen el conjunto de acciones que utiliza el docente para orientar la enseñanza con el fin de promover el aprendizaje de sus alumnos. Se trata de orientaciones generales acerca de cómo enseñar un contenido disciplinar considerando qué queremos que nuestros alumnos comprendan, por qué y para qué (Anijovich & Mora, 2009).

En el contexto de la utilización adecuada de estrategias metodológicas el Ministerio de Educación ha propuesto el documento: "Marco para la Buena Enseñanza", a través del cual, los docentes "conocen y seleccionan variadas estrategias metodológicas y... recursos de aprendizaje congruentes con la complejidad de los contenidos". Este instrumento se ha transformado en el marco regulador de la función docente, con la finalidad de orientarlo en los dominios y descriptores que guían su accionar profesional.

El docente adapta y organiza estas estrategias metodológicas y recursos didácticos de acuerdo con las características individuales de cada alumno. Esta personalización de la enseñanza consiste en la selección de métodos de enseñanza en función del conocimiento previo del alumno. De esta forma, la propuesta del aprendizaje significativo de David Ausubel, por ejemplo, considera el aprender como un sinónimo de comprender (Carretero, 2005). Además establece que aquello que se comprende, se recordará mejor. Aunque también dependerá de una predisposición favorable de parte del estudiante para incorporar los conocimientos nuevos con agrado y relacionarlos con los ya existentes. Ausubel propone considerar dos dimensiones: el aprendizaje del alumno y la estrategia de enseñanza, basada en el descubrimiento por el propio alumno.

Como señala Montenegro el rol docente, hoy en día, involucra, entre otros, tareas de diseño y creación de entornos y experiencias de aprendizaje, orientadas a elevar el conocimiento a niveles superiores a través de estrategias metodológicas que pueden expresarse (Montenegro, 2005), por ejemplo, en una mejor comprensión y una mejor actuación del estudiante frente a la realidad. En sentido general, una estrategia es una actitud constante que se mantiene a través de una serie de actividades y que busca a través de ellas el cumplimiento de un determinado objetivo. También se puede ver la estrategia como un conjunto de reglas para asegurar una buena decisión. En el ámbito pedagógico, la estrategia metodológica se refiere a un conjunto de actividades que por su organización, facilita la probabilidad de obtener un determinado logro.

Por otra parte, el principal problema de los docentes de la generación digital, es que la sociedad actual cambia muy rápidamente. Los profesores se han formado y continúan desarrollándose con una cultura y una visión del significado de su profesión que ya ha cambiado (Gros & Silva, 2005).

Por lo anterior, urge incorporar en los programas de formación inicial docente, una serie de elementos relacionados a la inserción de las TICs como herramienta de apoyo en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, que preparen a los educadores para los escenarios actuales y también para aquellos espacios que se prevén para el futuro, en el corto, mediano y largo plazo.

En efecto, los docentes tienen que aprender métodos y prácticas nuevas de enseñanza, conociendo cómo usar los métodos de evaluación apropiados para su nueva pedagogía y las tecnologías que sean más pertinentes. También deben poseer las capacidades que permitan a sus estudiantes usar las tecnologías en sus clases, ya que si bien la mayoría de ellos conocen las tecnologías, les faltan las habilidades para usarlas bien en clases. Se considera también relevante la Teoría de las Inteligencias Múltiples de Howard Gardner y su aplicación en la práctica pedagógica puesto que

“refuerza la idea de que hay diferentes maneras en que las personas aprenden, representan, procesan la información y comprenden el mundo que nos rodea” (Galindo & Galindo, 2011: 2). Gardner identifica aspectos variados de la cognición distinguiendo a personas que tienen diferentes fortalezas cognitivas y estilos de aprendizaje contrastantes. Esta es un mecanismo que nos permite entender las formas en que éstos aprenden con mayor facilidad y de este modo poder ayudarlos a ser más exitosos en otras áreas (Suazo, 2006). Esta teoría ha incrementado el interés particularmente para los profesores de cualquier nivel de enseñanza ya que propone capacidades de inteligencias autónomas que resultan en muchas formas diferentes de saber, comprender y aprender acerca del mundo que nos rodea.

Si se preguntara cuál es el mejor alumno de una clase, no sería fácil responder. ¿Por qué un estudiante es brillante en Matemática y más lento en Lenguaje o inglés, por ejemplo? La teoría de Gardner nos ofrece una respuesta a esta interrogante. Naturalmente, no debemos confundir los estilos de aprendizaje con las inteligencias múltiples. Los estilos pueden variar según la tarea, no así las inteligencias múltiples.

Recursos Didácticos

Los recursos didácticos representan un componente clave en la metodología y práctica pedagógica. La selección acertada y el buen uso que se le asigne a cada recurso, asegurará o no el éxito en el cumplimiento de los objetivos propuestos.

Al respecto, (Spiegel, 2008: 42) establece en su propuesta “Planificando Clases Interesantes” que “recurso didáctico es todo material que a partir de sus ventajas para el contexto en el que será utilizado, se convierte en instrumento para la composición en función de la necesidad del docente. Considerando que el quehacer docente ofrece variadas oportunidades orientadas al logro de aprendizajes significativos, es esencial la observación, exploración, análisis y reflexión del mejor aprovechamiento del material didáctico para un determinado contexto.

Investigadores como Charles F. Hoban, James D. Finn y Edgar Dale, (Spiegel, 2008) descubrieron que los medios y recursos didácticos tecnológicos pueden aportar ventajas al mejoramiento de los aprendizajes puesto que ofrecen una experiencia real que estimula la actividad por parte de los alumnos, desarrollan continuidad de pensamiento y enriquecen los significados. Despertando la motivación y creando un interés por el tema a desarrollar.

Por tanto, la utilización de recursos didácticos en la enseñanza tiene una doble misión: por un lado, mejorar el aprendizaje de los alumnos y por otro, crear condiciones para que profesores y educandos puedan interactuar dentro de un ambiente favorable, con el fin de conseguir los mejores resultados en el proceso de formación.

III. Diseño metodológico

El método de estudio a seguir es de corte cuantitativo ya que implica la recolección y el análisis de datos de los cuestionarios aplicados a profesores, directivos y apoderados en relación a los recursos y metodologías, para su posterior relación con variables a considerar. De este modo, un mismo objeto de estudio es abordado desde diferentes perspectivas a fin de comparar datos.

Para este contexto, se opta por una investigación de tipo exploratorio, pues no existen estudios previos que permitan evidenciar que recursos se utilizan y como se utilizan en el aula. Posteriormente, el curso de la investigación adquirió un enfoque descriptivo transeccional para recolectar datos en un solo momento, a fin de observar el fenómeno tal y como se da en su contexto natural a través de la descripción exacta de los objetos, procesos y personas.

El estudio contempló las siguientes:

Exploratoria: Documental – Instrumentos y Técnicas de Recolección de Información

Para el levantamiento de la información se utilizaron las siguientes técnicas: el cuestionario y el grupo focal. En primera instancia se diseñaron instrumentos para los directivos, docentes en ejercicio, alumnos, y padres - apoderados de la escuela municipal de Punta Arenas. Estos cuestionarios abarcaron tres secciones; en tanto, el cuestionario de los docentes incluyó cuatro secciones. Las variables que sustentan el diseño de los cuestionarios son los recursos didácticos y las estrategias didácticas. En la primera sección se agregaron variables relacionadas a datos generales (género, edad, curso, años de experiencia, asignaturas que atiende); la segunda sección consistió en preguntas cerradas y abiertas, con el objetivo de obtener una valoración cualitativa en torno a las variables de estudio y contribuir al logro de los objetivos propuestos para esta investigación.

A partir de la necesidad de conocer las percepciones y respuestas grupales de los profesores en relación a la temática de estudio, se optó por utilizar el grupo focal a través de entrevistas colectivas semiestructuradas. Por lo tanto, a través de esta técnica se complementó la información entregada en el cuestionario.

a. Selección de la Muestra

Considerando las características de esta investigación, se optó por realizar un muestreo no probabilístico. Se utilizó una muestra de tipo estratificada que tuvo como finalidad incluir subgrupos con características similares a fin de estudiarlos a fondo. Nos referimos a los profesores jefes, profesores de asignaturas, directivos, alumnos y apoderados.

b. Distribución de la muestra

ACTORES	NÚMERO	PORCENTAJE
Directivos	3	3%

Docentes	31	27%
Apoderados	40	35%
Alumnos	40	35%

c. Análisis y Procesamiento de la Información

El proceso de análisis se realizó en base a los resultados del levantamiento de datos a través de los cuestionarios y grupos focales. Después de la recogida de datos a través de los cuestionarios mencionados, se dio inicio a la etapa de clasificación o agrupación de los datos referentes a cada variable objeto de estudio y su presentación conjunta. Durante este proceso se revisaron y depuraron los datos obtenidos. Posteriormente y con el propósito de facilitar la tabulación se codificaron las respuestas.

IV. Análisis e interpretación de resultados

Los indicadores de análisis responden a las categorías Recursos Didácticos y Estrategias metodológicas que se utilizan en el aula y el nivel de satisfacción respectivo, por parte de apoderados, alumnos y docentes de la escuela.

V. Resultados

El presente análisis corresponde a los resultados de la aplicación del cuestionario a los siguientes actores: directivos, docentes, alumnos y apoderados, como las entrevistas a los directivos y docentes.

Tanto los directivos como los docentes del establecimiento, coinciden en que las capacitaciones se realizan de acuerdo a las necesidades pedagógicas del alumnado, como del interés de los profesores.

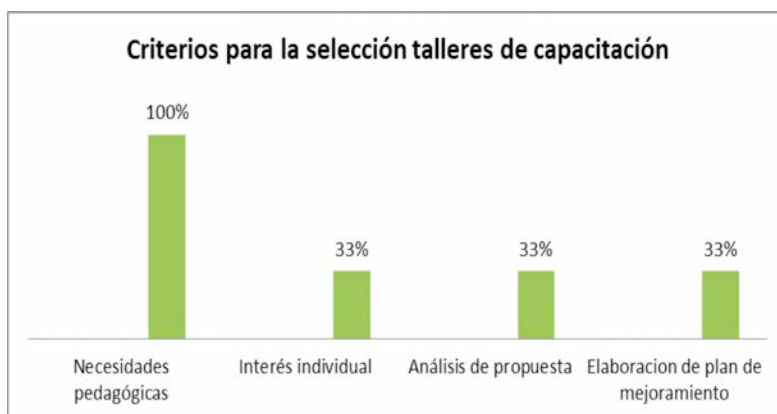


Gráfico 1. Criterios para la selección talleres de capacitación

Según los entrevistados este mismo criterio se utiliza también para la adquisición de recursos.

El 65% de los encuestados indica que las reuniones con UTP y los consejos de profesores son las instancias donde se reflexiona sobre la utilización de los recursos didácticos y la forma como estos recursos se aprovechan en el aula.



Gráfico 2. Instancias de reflexión sobre la utilización de recursos y estrategias

También se mencionan otras que son informales como las conversaciones con la UTP y profesores, en los tiempos “libres” que tienen en común.

Un 65% de los docentes afirman que los recursos utilizados sí se adaptan a los intereses de los alumnos. Sin embargo, un 6% defiende y reconoce una adaptación ocasional, mientras que un 23% de los docentes no responde.

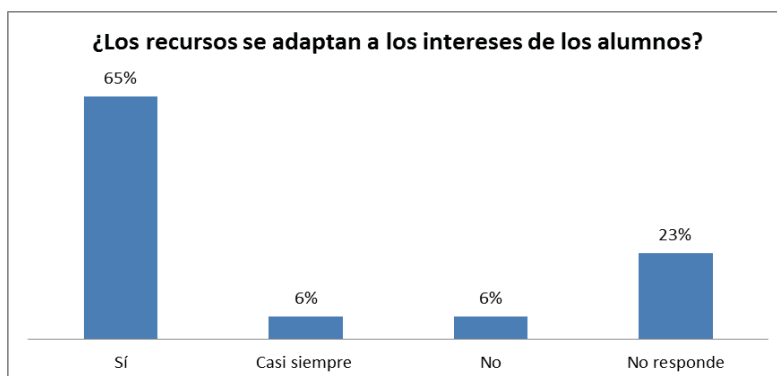


Gráfico 3. ¿Los recursos se adaptan a los intereses de los alumnos?

Esto se debe principalmente, según los profesores y directivos, a que las distintas acciones comprometidas en el plan de mejora, son producto de un diagnóstico de contenidos y necesidades de los alumnos.

Un 58% de los docentes afirma que la incorporación de recursos a través de la Ley SEP, ha producido algún cambio en el uso de las estrategias en las asignaturas de lenguaje y matemática.

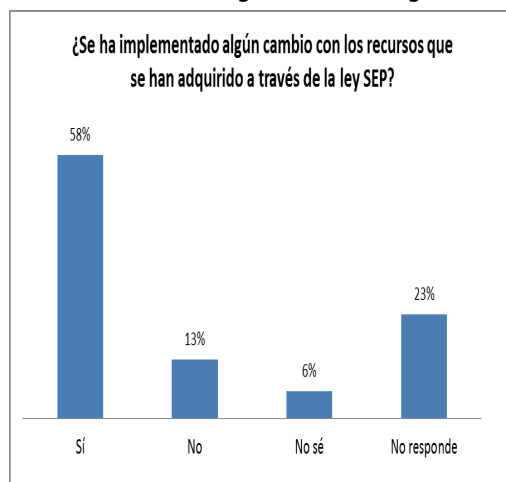


Gráfico 4. ¿Se ha implementado algún cambio con los recursos que se han adquirido de la ley SEP?

Un 55% de docentes opina que el recurso más solicitado por los alumnos es la pizarra interactiva, seguido del uso de la computadores (29%). Por otra parte, se evidencian tres recursos pedagógicos que comparten el mismo grado de preferencia, el uso del laboratorio, guías y materiales impresos y juegos didácticos (puzles). Asimismo, un 16% de los docentes no responde. Si se agrupan las respuestas independientes en dos categorías se puede agregar que los recursos tecnológicos son altamente valorados, a diferencia de los recursos convencionales que son menos valorados por los alumnos.



Gráfico 5. ¿Qué recursos didácticos solicitan los alumnos con más frecuencia?

Del mismo modo, la mitad de los docentes afirma que el recurso tecnológico más utilizado es la pizarra interactiva. Por otro lado, la pizarra blanca (recurso convencional) se valora en un bajo porcentaje. En tercera opción se observa el material del entorno también con una baja valoración (10%).

Además de la pizarra interactiva se valoran altamente otros recursos tecnológicos tales como videos y software de matemática. Por otra parte, entre los recursos convencionales, se consideran los textos escolares (los cuales se trabajan en forma digitalizada), las guías de trabajo y la pizarra blanca. El recurso pizarra interactiva es valorado por un 93% de los alumnos, lo cual representa un alto grado de utilización. No obstante, un 90% y 80% de los alumnos, respectivamente, también declara utilizar textos y guías de trabajo en la sala de clases. Por último, entre los recursos menos utilizados se encuentran el software educativo de matemática (30%), el uso de gráficos (18%) y la utilización del proyector o data show (15%).

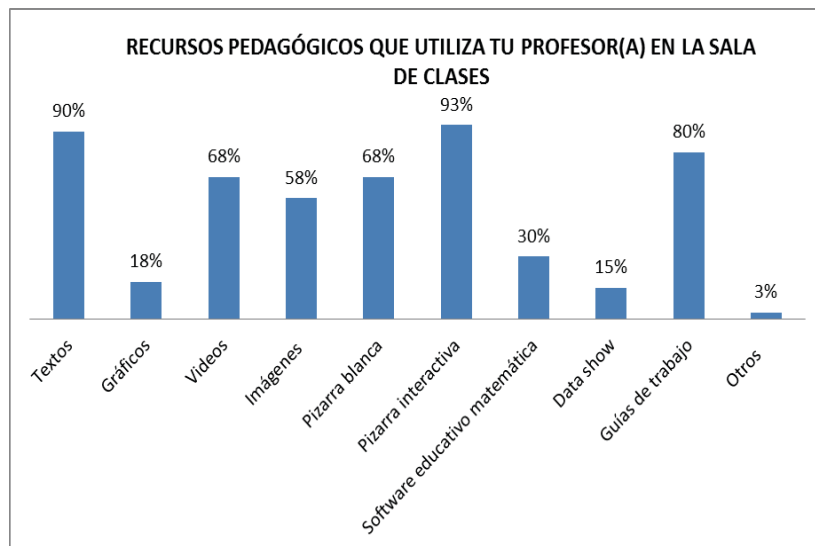


Gráfico 6. Recursos pedagógicos que utiliza tu profesor/a en la sala de clases

Los directivos y profesores opinan que gracias a la Ley SEP ha sido posible instaurar nuevas herramientas para facilitar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, es decir, nuevo material didáctico como por ejemplo las pizarras interactivas. Los docentes destacan que éstas son un plus, porque hoy en día los alumnos son más tecnológicos, entonces estas pizarras son más atractivas y cercanas para ellos.

En relación a la frecuencia con que se utilizan los recursos, se corrobora el uso del recurso Pizarra Interactiva (PI) diariamente. Por otro lado, un porcentaje menor comparten las opciones una vez por semana y cada dos días.

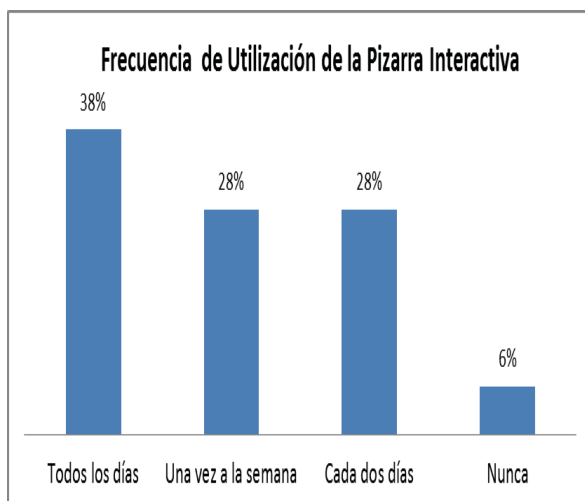


Gráfico 7. Frecuencia de utilización de la Pizarra Interactiva

La percepción de los apoderados en torno a la frecuencia de uso de los recursos entregó los siguientes resultados:



Gráfico 8. Recursos didácticos más frecuentes utilizados por alumnos/as en escuela

Un 93% de los apoderados identifica la pizarra interactiva como el recurso tecnológico más utilizado, seguido del recurso convencional texto escolar (80%). Asimismo, un 78% de los apoderados destaca las impresiones y fotocopias como los recursos convencionales más utilizados. Sin embargo, la baja valoración de la opción "otros recursos" se asocia al hecho que son recursos específicos de una asignatura en particular.

Las estrategias que los docentes utilizan con mayor frecuencia en el desarrollo de los aprendizajes de los alumnos son la opción "Otras" considerada por más de la mitad de los docentes (55%). Esta opción incluye el monitoreo, la retroalimentación y lluvia de ideas en su mayoría. Le sigue el uso de la pizarra interactiva y uso de juegos. Por otra parte, las estrategias menos valoradas en el desarrollo de los aprendizajes la conforman los trabajos en grupo y las lecturas en general.

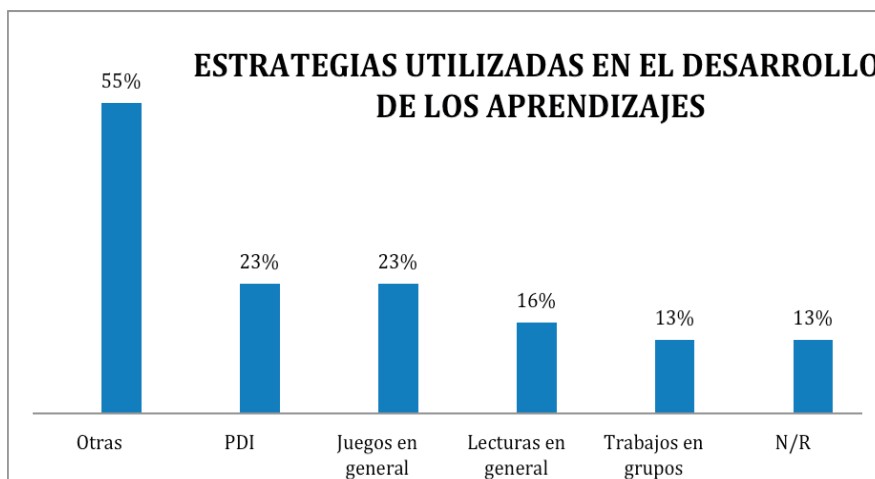


Gráfico 9. Estrategias utilizadas en el desarrollo de los aprendizajes

En las entrevistas los docentes mencionan la importancia de equilibrar los recursos tecnológicos con las actividades lúdicas de los alumnos, con el objetivo de mejorar la interacción y colaboración entre los alumnos.

Los alumnos señalan estar de acuerdo con la existencia de recursos didácticos, tanto tecnológicos como convencionales, que favorecen el proceso educativo en cada asignatura y a los cuales tienen fácil acceso. Se destaca la alta valoración asignada al buen manejo de los contenidos de las materias que enseñan sus profesores. La utilización de una variedad de recursos audiovisuales y didácticos como también el programa de mantenimiento de los recursos didácticos es igualmente altamente valorada. Por otro lado, los alumnos tienen la percepción de que los materiales utilizados en la clase son entretenidos y las actividades propuestas por los docentes son motivadoras. Los alumnos destacan el acompañamiento del profesor en el desarrollo de su aprendizaje. Solamente un pequeño porcentaje de la muestra no expresa su opinión.

De acuerdo a los resultados obtenidos, se destaca el alto nivel de satisfacción de los apoderados (76%) con la forma en que los docentes enseñan a sus pupilos. Asimismo, los apoderados señalan que los profesores aplican adecuadamente los recursos audiovisuales y didácticos que se encuentran disponibles en el establecimiento. Igualmente, la percepción de los apoderados indica que los materiales utilizados por los docentes en la clase contribuyen al proceso de formación de sus pupilos.

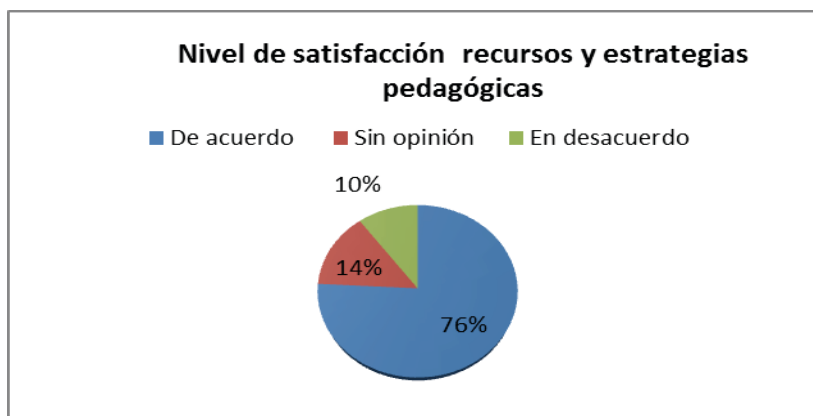


Gráfico 10. Nivel de satisfacción, recursos y estrategias pedagógicas

Lo cual concuerda con la percepción del equipo directivo respecto al nivel de satisfacción entre los recursos didácticos y las estrategias metodológicas, que también es altamente favorable y valorada.

VI. Conclusión

La Ley SEP logró movilizar e ingresar en la "vida" del establecimiento educacional, puesto que es parte de su cultura organizacional.

Se observa un catastro ordenado de los recursos incluyendo procedimientos y criterios para la adquisición de los mismos y están acorde a las necesidades e intereses de los alumnos.

La pizarra interactiva es altamente valorada por los profesores y alumnos y se demuestra la apropiación de competencias para su utilización en los procesos formativos, en especial en las asignaturas de lenguaje y matemática.

Las estrategias utilizadas en lenguaje y matemática son variadas y según la apreciación de los docentes, éstas son también innovadoras.

Entre las acciones que apoyan la capacitación de los docentes, se observa que el colegio se preocupa permanentemente de la formación del personal administrativo y profesional del establecimiento centrándose en estrategias didácticas innovadoras y la utilización de los recursos adquiridos a través de la Ley SEP.

En el Plan de Mejora SEP se intenta perfeccionar las competencias pedagógicas de los profesores. En este contexto, el establecimiento educacional evidencia una política de mejoramiento a través de las distintas instancias de capacitación con las que se cuenta.

La incorporación de recursos tecnológicos en el aula representa una forma de acercar a los alumnos más vulnerables de la comuna a una tecnología de primer nivel. Asimismo, estos recursos tecnológicos han sido integrados por el cuerpo de profesores, lo que indica la adquisición de experiencia ante las problemáticas educativas que involucra el uso de recursos informáticos en las prácticas pedagógicas.

La posibilidad de realizar un proyecto utilizando recursos tecnológicos, en particular una pizarra interactiva, permitirá alcanzar diferentes conocimientos con respecto a su implementación en el establecimiento educacional, con la finalidad de desarrollar una estrategia en relación a la medición del impacto y resultado de esta innovación.

La comunidad educativa valora fuertemente la llegada de nuevos recursos especialmente destinados a financiar iniciativas de mejoramiento.

Los resultados de la encuesta permitieron obtener datos en relación a la implementación de recursos y estrategias metodológicas para la mejora continua en el contexto del Plan SEP. Esta investigación, exploratoria, amerita futuras investigaciones con otro tipo de instrumentos y desde otras perspectivas metodológicas, que nos puedan brindar datos más significativos y profundos de las implicaciones pedagógicas, cognitivas, instruccionales como también insumos para la creación de materiales educativos.

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Multimedia games for fun and learning English in preschool

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Abstract

Based on the assumption that educational software addressing Primary school learners must comprise a set of features to encourage children's creativity and development, the appropriate design of second language hypermedia adaptive games for Primary School children can pose a wide range of challenges both for the language teacher and computer specialist alike. Factors such as the educational context, cognitive abilities, linguistic constraints, conceptual and psychomotor restrictions, and so on, contribute to challenging professionals. This means they must deal with linguistic, content and technology adaptation queries. Based on the results from multi-factorial analysis, this paper aims firstly to demonstrate that the design of hypermedia tasks can be optimally implemented by following previous phases of data collection on preferred items. In this sense, the questioning approach for the creation of a hypermedia system has led us to analyze learning factors in order to deal with the possible linguistic, conceptual and technological demands in the children's learning environment. General results in the preliminary phases of the study show the need to steer the learning path towards an effective adaptation to children's cognitive abilities. These are the findings from which we have devised a set of hypermedia tasks which provide the adaptation of the information presented to the student according to individual objectives, interests and/or knowledge.

Keywords

adaptive hypermedia systems, CALL, web-based systems, preschool and ICT

I. Introduction

Computer technology is being widely used for teaching a foreign language at all types of levels and settings (Stockwell, 2012). The key factor sought in the classroom is effectiveness in the use of resources, a search which can be especially intricate and yet rewarding in the case of young learners (Edwards, Pemberton, Knight, & Monaghan, 2002; Plowman, Stevenson, Stephen, & McPake, 2012). We believe that for very young learners, a possible solution should be input management by means of adaptive hypermedia systems (AHS), conceived and designed according to specific early age language learning needs, demands, and abilities (Prentzas, 2012).

This paper aims to present some significant data in the light of the claims above, in particular, the development of a tutoring system and games focused on teaching and researching foreign language learning at an early age. Designed under the auspices of a regional research project, our work (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2006) is applied to 3-6 year-old children whose foreign language learning development includes IT as a prime teaching tool.

To reach the objectives, the paper is divided into four general sections and starts out with a brief introduction to the combination of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and foreign language learning in childhood settings. This section is followed by data collection through an analysis of the factors involved. Then, the design of hypermedia tasks appropriate for primary school children are dealt with, describing the architecture of the system, and the platform which contains and personalizes both the content and the interface, adapting them to each student's needs. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the information interaction found and the lines opened for further research are presented.

II. Multifactorial analysis

There is a growing agreement about the many different ways that ICT can contribute to changing the types of the activities, roles and relationships experienced by children. In this sense, the appropriate uses of ICT in early childhood education settings could be based on the minor pressure to meet educational targets and the suitability to experiment and apply children-centred practices (Liang, Yuan, & He, 2009).

Many are the possibilities by which ICT can be part of early childhood education, either by the integration of technology into children's learning process and fun -using ICT in their play or learning - or by using ICT to monitor, plan and manage children's learning -building portfolios of children's work for evaluating progress, for exchanging information with other teachers or, parents- (Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012; Turgut & İrgin, 2009).

All planning for the introduction and use of ICT in early childhood education should be grounded in a clear understanding of the purposes, practices and social environments. In this sense, children's needs should be found and the uses of everyday technology identified, so that young learners can have fruitful chances to use ICT as a support of their learning and entertainment (Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007).

There are studies which support the need for educators to have well-developed understandings of the potential of ICT (e.g. O'Hara, 2004; O'Rourke & Harrison, 2004; Patterson, 2004), while there are other authors who claim that children's experience (or lack of experience) with ICT at home

and with their parents involvement is an important factor in planning for the use of ICT at early ages (Brooker & Siraj-Blatchford, 2002; Downes, 2002; Lee, Hatherly, & Ramsey, 2012).

On the other hand, other contextual factors to explain the lack of ICT use in early childhood education could include: teachers' limited training, insufficient equipment, absence of technical support or a lack of time to develop ICT-integrated teaching or learning activities (O'Hara, 2004).

Under any of these circumstances, an approach which could describe how children's interactions with computers and other forms of ICT takes place lies in the concept of guided interaction, a guidance supported by teachers and parents by face-to-face interactions and/or by the visual and verbal instructions provided by the computer itself (Durham, Farkas, Hammer, Bruce Tomblin, & Catts, 2007; Garrett & Young, 2009; Gjems, 2013).

Likewise, the concept of task and game performance in pre-school settings should be focused more on the process of learning than on the successful achievement of content. Most of preschool programs are characterized by raising awareness and are designed as a foundation on which more complex skills depend- e.g. recognizing symbols which will help them read, physical development allowing children to perform more complicated movements, adaptive computer interactions which will let them develop more complex functions, developments which will prepare children to deal successfully with the challenges of further school and everyday tasks (Aghlara & Tamjid, 2011; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012).

If one of the most critical steps of language learning at early ages is the process of picking out and recognizing words, sounds and basic structures of a language (Burchinal, Field, López, Howes, & Pianta, 2012; Ekizoglu & Ekizoglu, 2011; Sun & Dong, 2004), our adaptive set of games could make children part of an enriched multimedia environment in which the acquisition of these language components are encouraged by:

- Engaging children in vocabulary, key sentences and short conversation repetitions, which will help young learners to read, to recount a story and interact with others, important aspect of oral language development (Korat, 2010).
- Playing in a hypermedia context for children's language development. The adaptive games which will help children try out new ways of combining thought and language (Cumbreño, Rico, Curado, & Domínguez, 2006).
- Scaffolding. Children's language is enhanced when adults, older children or in our case computer games scaffold their play, making them bear in mind their roles. (Linklater, O'Connor, & Palardy, 2009).
- Interactions with multimedia environments -symbols, shapes, sounds, colors and even letters- are powerful in forming understandings about their daily life and world around them (Griva, Semoglou, & Geladari, 2010).
- Creating phonological awareness through hearing and thinking about the language itself can help children learn to read. When children are able to map the sounds of speech onto the letters they become aware that continuous speech is broken down into discrete sounds (Seker, Girgin, & Akamca, 2012).

- Development of language fluency can be based on the game instructions, the continuous interactions and the opportunities to engage children in spelling activities (Kleemans, Segers, & Verhoeven, 2011).
- Listening to short stories (and reading when older than 6) depends on vocabulary and general knowledge, skills which can be developed through the completion of the computer games. While oral comprehension may develop “naturally,” reading requires instruction. It is a process in which multimedia can play a leading factor (Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007).

a. Computer within the preschool classroom

According to research experts (S. W. Haugland, 2000; Stephen & Plowman, 2008; Plowman, Stevenson, Mcpake, Stephen, & Adey, 2011), claims are made to the effect that computers should be physically introduced in kindergarten and primary level classrooms in a coherently integrated fashion with the rest of the learning resources. Opposed to the creation of separate computer rooms removed from the habitual learning area of the children, the recommendable student /computer ratio, (S. W. Haugland, 2000), maintains the suitability of students’ corners, having one computer for every seven pupils, at most.

Thus, classrooms for early ages must be organized in such a way as to globally enhance knowledge-building, and specific methodological proposals of classroom organization can include activity corners that promote cooperation by means of tools like digital boards and computer stations. Furthermore, in this kind of atmosphere it seems that children activate their cognitive strategies, observe each other, play an active role in the learning process, explore and experiment with everything around them, exercise memory, develop motor skills, and so on. An added bonus is that collaborative work could also encourage the most advanced learners to behave as helpful peer-tutors of those who are not quite as adept.

b. Software at early ages

According to Haugland (2000), the appropriate use of computers, as well as the educational software implemented, may increase creativity and even self esteem in children. He also claims that children, exposed to software that tends to boost their development, may successfully increase their intelligence, verbal and non verbal skills, visual and movement-related abilities, structural knowledge, long-term memory, problem-solving and decision-making abilities, as well as abstraction and conceptual formation skills. On the contrary, the uncontrolled use of ICTs in the classroom could have a negative impact on children, causing possible rejection or frustration.

Haugland (1997:134) devises a ten criteria scale to determine whether young learner software could foster effective learning and claims if obtaining a score of 7 or higher such software may be considered suitable for the child’s educational integration. Criteria could be summarized as follow: (1) adaptation to learner’s age, (2) ability of child to pay attention and be able to control the process, (3) clear instructions, (4) progress of difficulty levels, (5) self-access and work possibilities for child, (6) non-violent content, (7) orientation on learning process, (8) capability in program for real world modeling, (9) technical features in the program, and (10) capability of program to undergone adaptation and further developments.

However we think that using educational software based on high quality rates does not necessarily guarantee success in the classroom. Our claim is that the optimal assessment of a learning application is actually made by the teacher within the classroom.

As for the content presented, educational software must be open and invite exploration in order to increase the child's creativity as well as enhance motivation, commitment and curiosity. At this level, in which children do not yet have sophisticated reading and/or writing skills, the auditory presentation of instructions plays a leading role. For these reasons, all activities, the interface, software structure, vocabulary, and all the other ingredients must be tailored to the age of the potential users of the product. Scaffolding, the hierarchical building of sequential activities, is another key element for calibrated involvement through computer support. Scaffolding could enable young students to reach objectives and educational goals, and make children progressively integrate into the social environment, promote their autonomy, and build new competencies in an expedient fashion.

c. Children and computer interaction

Of special interest in our analysis is the question of dexterity with the computer mouse and interaction with the computer itself. Children's motor abilities, as we know, develop over time. For this reason they may encounter difficulties in controlling the input device chosen, have trouble selecting specific areas on the computer screen within the application, find holding down buttons on the mouse too hard at first, need development in skills like pressing keys on the keyboard, and so on.

Input options must be efficient and easy to operate in order to create a user-friendly environment. The device selected for interaction with the system is the mouse since it seems to be the most efficient device for this age (Wood et al., 2004). As children are learning to use the mouse and considering that one click, for example, is easier than dragging, drag and drop or double-click, operations like double click or drag and drop require repetition and extended practice. In other words, we need to adapt the use of the mouse in the activities and games to the dexterity children possess.

Thus, according to our in-class research, we can state that.

1. Children should be able to interact with the mouse as easily as possible, as a simple interface usually becomes more accessible. They can manage one-click actions better than dragging, drag-and-drop, and double-click actions. Consequently, the lowest stages should have more operations such as click, and point and click. Nonetheless, at this lower level, more difficult interaction types such as dragging and double click (albeit being deferred to higher levels) can be conveniently adapted, e.g., by clicking on the object to attach it to the pointer (click-move), and clicking again to drop it at the desired location (click-move-click).
2. Considering young learners have problems selecting small areas on the screen, objects should be large enough and clearly distinguished. The same criteria should be applied to navigation buttons which, in addition, should have the same or very similar functionality for younger users.

d. Cognition, mental development and L2 acquisition at early ages

Although a number of child developmental theories have been used in the literature to speculate whether (or how) the computer would affect very young learners, either positively or negatively, (Brady & Hill, 1984; Elkind, 1987; Clements, Nastasi, & Swaminathan, 1993; Schetz & Stremmel, 1994), most of recent studies conclude that the adequate use of ICTs at these ages can improve children development (Plowman & Stephen, 2005; Clarke, 2006; Stephen & Plowman, 2008; Mangen, 2010; Anders et al., 2012; O'Hara, 2011; Peng, 2012; Plowman et al., 2012).

As stated, young learners have difficulties in understanding abstract concepts since they have not yet acquired most of the basic knowledge required for complex conceptualization and intricate information. They in turn, understand visual icons and relate to recognizable items which help them to extend knowledge and meaning. Within cognitive abilities at this age, imagination is instrumental and plays a leading role. Children are clever at associating learning situations with situations in real life, a quality which can be exploited for learning purposes. In this sense, most metaphoric proposals should be reserved for higher levels, since at lower stages children tend to expect all the objects to present the same proprieties as their real-life counterparts which does not mean that abstract content must be altogether omitted. In essence, the principle rule of design for content and levels of difficulty is that the software be fully adapted to children's features and cognitive abilities.

III. Data collection for user modelling and content

a. Contextual research

It is necessary to examine some of the learning variables involved in the creation of digital tasks, a questioning process which recommends quantitative analysis in order to study the influential factors at this level. For that purpose, initial research thorough questionnaires has been conducted in all the Primary centres in Extremadura (south-western Spain). This exploratory approach includes a set of questions regarding the number of students and teachers per class, hours per week dedicated to the teaching of English, the material and skills being practised in class and the like.

The first questionnaire was answered on-line by most teachers though it was also handed out in schools in paper form. The main information relevant to our study from this questionnaire is summarized as follows:

1. There is an average of 71 primary students per school and 17 students in the English classes.
2. 38 percent of the teachers using English in class do not have a specific degree in English.
3. The average time dedicated to English per week is one hour and 15 minutes.
4. More than 50 percent of the schools offer English as an extra-curricular activity in afternoon / evening classes.

5. As a result of regional governmental policies and funding encouraging computer literacy, starting in Pre-School on up, our community, Extremadura, has become a leader in Europe with regard to implanting ICTs at this early level.
6. Likewise, one of the main purposes was to find out exactly what kinds of resources were being used in the early language learning classrooms in Extremadura. In addition to the traditional resources used and measured by percentage from left to right in Figure 1 books, audio material, and flashcards, the use of computers reaches a 42% in the foreign language classroom of primary schools.
- 7.

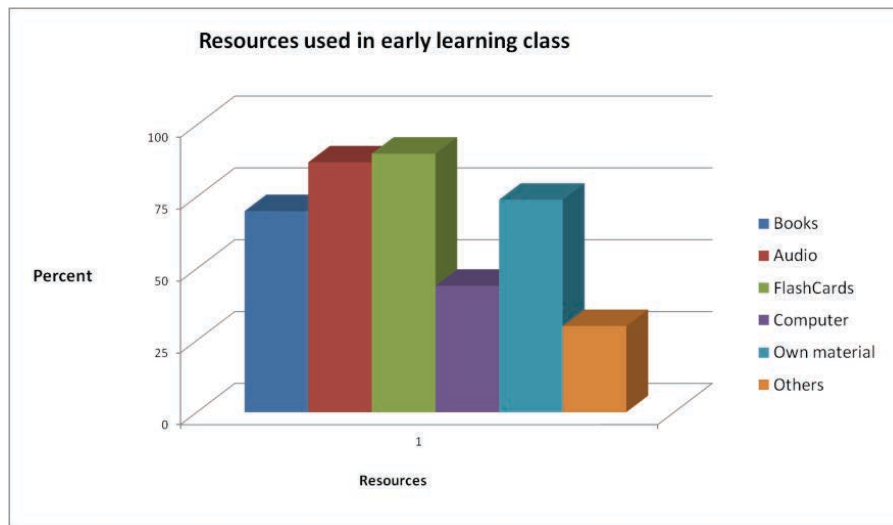


Figure 1. ICTs in Early Learning classes

In this sense and though almost 50 percent of the English teachers use computers in class as either a supporting tool or for games, more than 60 percent of the teachers recognise a demand for software that adapts to the students' levels and age.

b. Pedagogic domain

For the development of the pedagogic domain (nodes of information, content and links), the design of the hypermedia proposal is based on four main sources: (1) the European Portfolio for pre-school education (<http://www.edupa.uva.es/portfolio/>); (2) regional and national legislation regulating the implementation of English teaching in pre-school; (3) questionnaires and surveys on the teachers' observations of classroom preferences and curricular interests in the preschool classroom and (4) corpus-based linguistic information.

The European Portfolio of Languages (ELP) is a customized document designed to foster the recording of foreign language learners' individualized experiences with the learning process. The ELP proposes activities and tasks to be developed both in the classroom and at home so that children may become familiarized with the languages that surround them and begin to acquire specific content and skills. The ELP establishes learning marks by means of positioning specific skills that the child should have according to the levels.

As we said, the development of the hypermedia-tasks is also based on regional and national contexts. On 21 August 2001, the Council of Education, Science and Technology of the regional government (Junta de Extremadura), published an order regulating the implementation of English teaching in pre-school, becoming a part of the 2003/2004 curriculum for children aged 3 to 6 years old. Moreover, Royal Decree 829/2003 (LOCE, 2003) established as its second core objective (article 3) the need to foster foreign language learning in combination with educational technologies during children's early school years for the same age group:

Educational institutions shall foster the integration of a foreign language during Elementary and Pre-elementary stages of schooling, especially during the last year, and shall enhance the early use and application of Information and Communication. (personal translation)

In addition to the theoretical foundations derived from the educative legislation, questionnaires and surveys conducted at the schools informed us about preferences and interests regarding skills and micro-skills to be exploited with the learners (the main findings are shown in Figure 2).

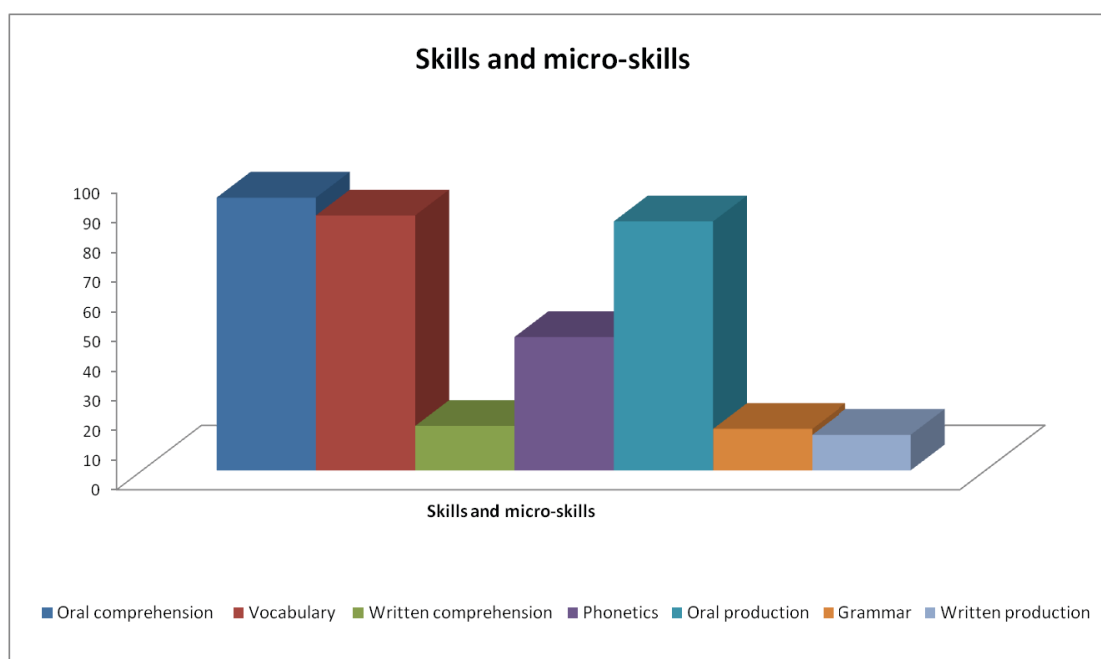


Figure 2. Skills and micro-skills for Preschool Children

As observed in Figure 2, oral comprehension and oral production are regarded as especially significant and thus emphasized in class. Vocabulary is also practised quite often by means of songs and inductive games. However, written production and comprehension are not valued as important at these early stages.

Finally, with the aim of establishing clear criteria and objectives for the empirical observation of real child communication, we integrated linguistic-communicative information based on selected transcripts from the CHILDES corpus (Child Language Data Exchange System), freely available on the web (<http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/>). As an illustration of our research, the use of singular first and second person pronouns by three and four year olds is noteworthy according to the statistical analysis of the corpus. In addition, there are a large number of nouns (nominalizations) in five year olds by comparison with other age categories. In contrast, in the case of English speaking children

in USA, the first person pronoun is used more at three and four years of age, whereas at later stages, this use decreases substantially.

In the analysis of the Table 1 we show how the contrastive view and itemization of such linguistic-communicative data between the terms and concepts introduced in our tasks and the frequency that appears in CHILDES, helped us in the design of the lessons.

Word	yes/no	Frequency
Head	Yes	179
Shoulder	Yes	695
Leg	Yes	552
Foot	Yes	506
Body	Yes	663
Hand	Yes	132
Look	Yes	134
Face	Yes	651
Mouth	Yes	307
One	Yes	865
Two	Yes	84
Three	Yes	146
Four	Yes	178
Five	Yes	110
Six	Yes	172
Seven	Yes	185
Eight	Yes	285
Nine	Yes	169
Long	Yes	223
Big	Yes	109
Blue	Yes	535
Red	Yes	397

Table 1. CHILDES: contrastive study

An interesting conclusion, after the quantitative analyses of legislation, questionnaires and oral transcripts, is the sequencing of topics tends to be fixed across the curricula from ages three to six. From all this information, seven didactic units are established, shaping the pedagogic domain in our hypermedia system: unit 1 Hello, unit 2 The body, unit 3 The family, unit 4 Toys, unit 5 Food, unit 6 The house, unit 7 The school.

Thus, with the information requested, we aim to elaborate charts of specific content and lessons to be programmed interactively depending on the type of learner to whom the unit is addressed (three, four, or five years old). Table 2 shows the content information that teachers answered regarding each unit that they deal with according to the different age levels.

Concepts	3	4	5
Colours			
Greetings and introductions			
Numbers			
Sizes and shapes			
The weather			
Feelings (love, hate ...) and likes - (I like/ I don't like)			
Specific Vocabulary of unit			
Simple descriptions of objects, people ...			
Space /time orientation (up, down, near ...)			
Actions (read, jump, run)			
Relatives (family, friends)			
Sensations, states of mind (happy, bored, I am cold...)			
Daily routines (wash one's hands, have breakfast...) and parts of the day			
Linguistic content			
Like/ Dislike			
Prepositions			
Commands (Imperative) - Let's			
To be			

It is ...			
Are you?			
To have			
Personal and possessive pronouns			
Can/Could - Would you like ...			
Adjectives - Comparative and superlative			
These is/are			
Do/does - Yes/no questions			
Wh/ open questions - Interrogative pronouns			
Vowels			

Table 2: Content exploited according to age levels

IV. Adaptative games for primary school children

a. Architecture

The architecture (Agudo, Sánchez, Rico & Domínguez, 2007:3850; Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2010) is divided into three different levels:

- The user interface executed by the user in the navigator.
- The Intelligent Server for the Adaptive Selection of Educational Tasks (SISATE – Servidor Inteligente para la Selección Adaptiva de Tareas Educativas) which are executed in the Server.
- The resource stockroom which holds the user data, the contents of the tasks, and the tasks themselves with their corresponding rules.

The user interface shows the learner the adaptive activities and scenes, as well as supplying the means of navigation through the contents. The intelligent Server makes the decisions on which particular tasks are those which are adequate for the individual user by calculating his/her characteristics. Furthermore, it completes the job of storing the learner's progress.

Last but not least, the resource stockroom is a database, which as its name suggests, stores all the data necessary for the correct functioning of the system, which includes user reference data, the content of the teaching units of the pedagogical domain, and the tasks and rules which will ultimately determine the content that will be visualized by each learner.

Communication on the part of the client and on the part of the Server (Figure 3) is reached via XML documents generated on the Server side in order to indicate on the client side the task which should be shown and which contents should be selected in order to build them, while the user interface takes charge of the actual construction. Once the client has finished the task, he/she will return it to the Server in another XML file, however, it should be noted that in this case, it will contain the results obtained by the learner regarding the task realization. Meanwhile the intelligent Server will fulfill the job of storing it in the user model.

This kind of architecture allows for the reuse of the intelligent Server for any type of adaptive application, since it only requires implementation of the XML communication protocol between the client and the Server in order to avail itself of the SISATE features which supply the adaptation, once again, based on the system's tasks and rules.

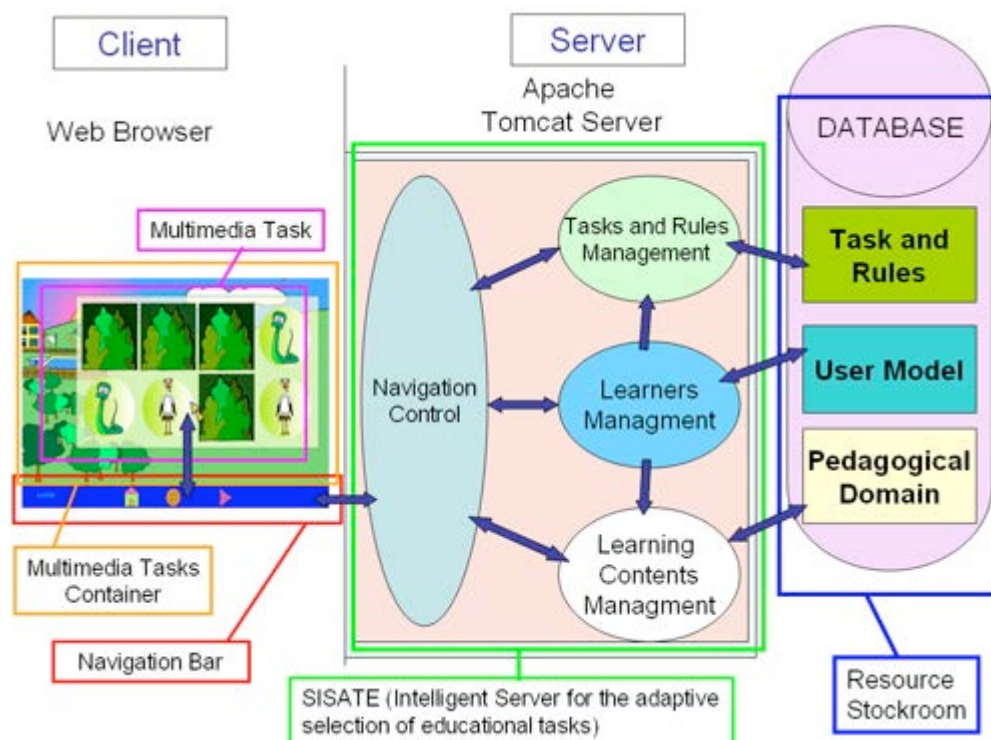


Figure 3. The architecture of SHAIEx (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2010)

i. User interface

The user interface is implemented in Macromedia Flash and is executed in the navigator belonging to the last user. It is divided into two main parts referred to as the navigation bar and, the container of the multimedia tasks.

The navigation bar consists of three buttons which permit user navigation through the contents offered. Its design has been carefully analyzed in order to adjust to the needs of very young learners. It searches for an interface which facilitates an intuitive as well as a simple navigation through the contents in order to avoid problems arising from the limited physical development in this age group. The image of the tiny house (the button on the extreme left) allows the child to go back home, that is, to the main menu of the application. This option is always available to facilitate

a return to the beginning should the child feel the desire to do so. The full spiral circle (the button in the centre) goes around and around allowing for the repetition of the current tasks simply because the child has found it to be attractive, or just because he/she needs to do it again. Lastly, the directional triangle (the button on the far right) pointing towards the right is used to move onwards and advance in that particular activity.

We can visualize an identification type LxUyTz on the screen to the extreme left of the buttons themselves. Here, Lx indicates the level of the current user, wherein Uy stands for the learning unit in which the student is currently working, while Tz represents the activity which is on display at the current moment. At this age level this information is of little or no interest to the child, but rather it serves as ID which facilitates an easy reference for the teacher to improve on errors and locate where exactly the learner is stuck if help is solicited. On the other hand, the buttons displayed on the right identify the user of the application by means of a photo or drawing.

The container of the multimedia tasks completes the mission of showing the educational tasks, be it in scenes or be it in activities according to the information received in the intelligent Server by means of the navigation bar. The container dynamically builds the tasks with the content adapted to the user and thus, makes it visible to him or her.

The navigation bar is in charge of communicating with the intelligent Server, which in turn sends back the task to be visualized. When dealing specifically with a task, the navigation bar informs the multimedia task container which task it should show as well as its contents. When several tasks should be returned, the navigation bar dynamically builds a menu with the possible tasks to be done, and, informs the container of those multimedia tasks to be shown.

Intelligent Server for the adaptive selection of educational tasks.

SISATE is the true core of the SHAIEx platform as it is responsible for deciding the most adequate task for each individual user at any given moment of the learning process. For the purposes of implementation the Apache Tomcat Server has been utilized for the development of a series of Servlets which apply the required functions. SISATE consists of four main components, namely, navigation control, tasks and rules management, user management system, and learning contents management.

Firstly, the role played by navigation control is that of communication between the intelligent Server and the user interface. Fundamentally, it transfers the interface calls to various administrators, and it formats the information received so as to return it to the client side.

Secondly, the tasks and rules management system is in charge of running through the dynamic structure of the corresponding tasks to each user by means of teaching learning rules which determine the most appropriate path for the student to follow.

Thirdly, the user management system handles the data corresponding to the user model of each student and keeps the aforementioned data up to date regarding student progress.

Fourthly, the content management is fed by what is contained in the pedagogical domain in order to determine what contents are the most appropriate ones within the tasks or scenes in adapting to the user's features.

Based on the previously outlined premises, the work process of SHAIEx can be expressed in the following terms: Once the user has been recognized by the system, the navigation bar solicits the next task from SISATE through navigation control, which communicates with the tasks and rules management, which in turn indicates the task which corresponds to each learner. At this point the system determines the corresponding tasks and rules by consulting the teaching database of the same name, and through the user management system, the student user model. Having established the corresponding tasks, all this information is returned to navigation control, although we reiterate that under those circumstances when several tasks are being dealt with, the information is returned to the navigation bar.

The information itself is returned by means of an XML file which stores the task list along with a reduced amount of information on each task so that a menu can be built in the user interface which allows for selection of the desired activity. The menu can be visualized in the multimedia container and the user can choose one of the many possible tasks offered there. Choosing a task makes the navigation bar resume communication with the navigation control system to request full information regarding that particular activity. Given this situation, as we are already aware of the activity we are to show, the learning contents management is directly consulted on what is contained in the task in question. The contents of the task are determined by the learning contents management, by the task itself and by the user model obtained from the learner's management system. Thus, the information on these task contents are returned to navigation control which returns an XML file with all of the information surrounding that particular activity as follows: configuration, content, and blocks of content in the case of adaptive activities. The navigation bar receives the information and dynamically builds the adaptive activity with the elements indicated, and finally, provides for its visualization in the multimedia task container.

When the tasks and rules management is consulted, one sole task is returned. Instead of only returning the information relative to that task, the navigation control system consults the contents management system of all the task associate content (animations, graphs and sounds). Afterwards, this contents management consults the pedagogical domain for all the necessary information to directly build the task. Furthermore, the information in the XML file is sent to the navigation bar, which in turn, dynamically builds the adaptive scene or activity in order to show it by means of the multimedia task container.

Resource stockroom

The intelligent Server needs to store user information, the contents and the structuring through the use of tasks and rules. This information is stored in a database that is divided into what are referred to as the pedagogical domain, tasks and rules, and, the user model.

Within the pedagogical domain the contents of every task and scene are stored in the form of animations, graphs and sounds. The aforementioned contents are grouped in blocks that associate the content which refers to each concept relative to the various activities and levels.

The structure of the adaptive course is stored in the section on tasks and rules by means of a description of the activities which make it up, and those rules that determine which tasks will be shown to each user type. The intelligent Server is based on a user model in order to determine what teaching rules are to be applied, and therefore, what tasks will be chosen.

Finally, the user model stores all the necessary user information required for realization of the adaptation and follow up of student activity in the platform. As a result of this follow up, the tutor establishes when to update the user model with the express purpose of moving the learner up to the next educational level.

The database additionally sees to it that all the necessary information is stored for the system administration. Therefore the information as regards teachers, educational centers and classrooms is stored, assuring the correct functioning of the platform.

b. Adaptation

Our system (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2006) provides adaptation of the information presented to the student according to the following specific user features:

- Educational level: Based on the curriculum for pre-school education.
- Knowledge: Contents adapted as the child progresses.
- Dexterity with the mouse: Adaptation of the mouse interaction style in those activities and games relevant to the actual dexterity preschoolers possess in order for them to be able to handle it (Agudo, Sánchez, & Rico, 2010). This feature can be assessed by examining the speed at which children execute the operation, the number of mistakes they make and how comfortable children feel while using the mouse (Donker & Reitsma, 2007).
- Language: We will allow the inclusion of other languages (French, Spanish, etc.) that the children may be learning at school.
- Difficulty of the activities: The complexity of the activities and games will be adapted to the age level.
- Textual information: We may, or may not, include a textual label according to the age level of the target learners.

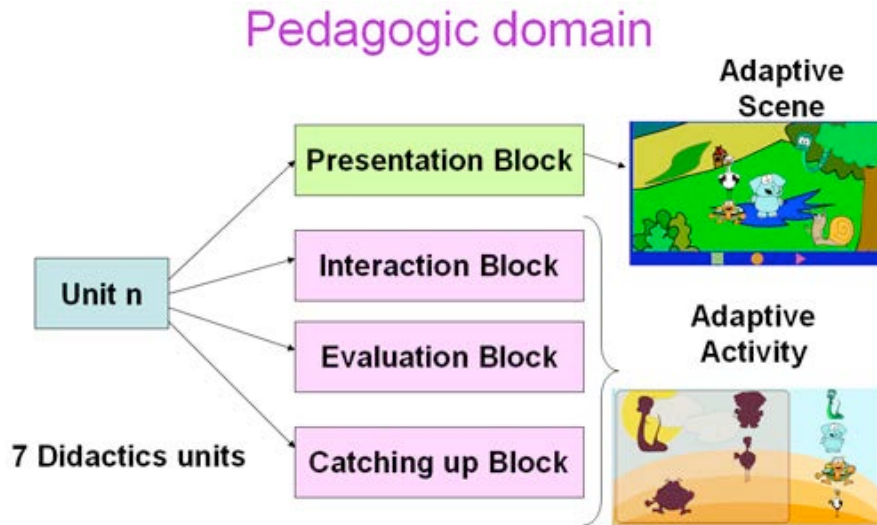


Figure 4. Pedagogic domain structure

These features comprise the set up of the user model which allows for adaptive navigation support, adaptive presentation and adaptive interaction according to the user's features (Brusilovsky, 2001; Durlach & Lesgold, 2012). The children's educational level and their knowledge are both used to provide adaptive navigation support and determine the adequate learning path for the children. For adaptive presentation we use the language, the difficulty of the task, the textual information and also the educational level to be kept in mind when presenting the contents. Lastly, we use dexterity with the mouse to provide adaptive interaction, the activities children will be able to do with click, double click, drag & drop, etc. depending on their motor abilities.

We implement the adaptation through the adaptive scenes, adaptive activities and structural rules (Carro, Pulido, & Rodríguez, 1999). By means of the structural rules we divide the pedagogic domain in didactic units, each of which includes four blocks of activities, namely: presentation, interaction, evaluation and review (Figure 4).

- The first block is aimed at familiarizing learners with word association and vocabulary acquisition by interactive means.
- The second block is designed to consolidate concepts and linguistic content by means of interactive games.
- The third part evaluates acquired knowledge. The teaching blocks are presented to the user in an orderly fashion according to specific teaching rules. So, before accessing the evaluation block, input and interaction blocks should have been previously successfully achieved.
- The fourth block will be presented to the student only when the evaluation block has not been achieved, or alternatively, for revision purposes.

Each block consists of one or more activity scenes (i.e. tasks), which are essentially educational games or animated scenes that the young learner is either to complete or simply observe. These tasks are implemented with adaptive scenes and activities. The adaptive scenes present content

according to the educational level of each student and the target language to be learned. As illustrated in figure 2, the sample presentation of unit 2 "The Body" for learning levels 2 and 3, the number of characters differs with respect to the learning level we encounter. Whereas level 2 introduces the stork, turtle, snake and elephant as starting input, level 3 adds the snail and the frog to the cast of actors. As the level increases, so does the complexity of the dialogues with the aim of introducing additional expressions and vocabulary. Continuing with the example shown in Figure 5, the vocabulary of level 2 includes "Head, Body, Leg, Foot, Hand and Shoulder", to consecutively expand to "Face, Mouth, Eyes, Nose and Ears" in level 3.



Figure 5. Adaptive scene from SHAIEx.

Immediately following the presentation of the contents, children are allowed to interact with the elements in the scene by clicking on each of them to reinforce vocabulary as well as to encourage their active participation. Finally, to conclude the presentation block, each one of the elements is individually shown as a separate item for a few seconds in order to reinforce the concepts hopefully acquired.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Mouse interaction style	One Click	Click move click	Drag and drop
Objetives	Identify Characters	Identify Animals	Identify Countries
Number of elements (difficulty)	3	4	5
Language	English	English	English
Text information	No	No	Yes

Figure 6. Adaptive activity.

The adaptive activities, on the other hand, take into account the educational level, the interaction level (that is, the interaction with the mouse), and the target language.

It is important to account for the difficulty and the mouse interaction style when adapting the activities to the educational level and psychomotor skills of very young learners. The location of the multimedia elements inside these activities is randomly determined to produce a range of variations. In the activity shown in Figure 6, the child is asked to place the character in the corresponding silhouette after having listened to information and descriptive hints.

Likewise, the adaptation will be carried out according to different parameters such as the number of characters, the audio information related to each character, showing the text information or not, and the mouse interaction style.

The audio attached to each character depends on the language and educational level the child is currently at. To illustrate language level considerations, at level 1 the character's name will be identified; for level two the animal type will be chosen and for level 3 the information to be identified is the character's origin. As is to be expected, the textual information only appears at level 3, due to the target age group. Finally, the way of carrying out the activity for each level of dexterity with the mouse will also be adapted (i.e. one click, click move click, drag and drop).

c. Adaptive Games

For the current version of SHAIEx, we have developed 10 different educational games (Agudo, Sánchez, Holguín & Tello, 2007) and for some of them several versions have been implemented.

As an outline example, in the following subparagraphs we describe the interactive games that appear in the didactic unit "Hello" of the present version of SHAIEx. The block of presentation of this unit also changes based on the selected educational level. Thus, in Level 1, the child listens to the name of the mascots of SHAIEx. In Level 2, in addition to the name, also the kind of animal to which each mascot belongs is listened. Finally, in Level 3, the audio includes the country of origin and the nationality of each character.

For all the games and within each educational level, there can be several levels of difficulty. This adaptation parameter forms the number of elements with which the child will have to interact. On the other hand, only at educational level 3 is the image accompanied by textual information.

V. Final discussions

In general terms, Pre-school education is a particularly interesting area for investigating the use of ICT as it offers opportunities to observe the relationship between in-class and informal learning and, in our case, the suitability of combining learner-adapted games and adult-guided instructions. Our study also reveals the difficulties of the process –e.g. the challenges of mastering computer interactions at this level, the design of adapted material for childhood settings, the process of language acquisition, etc.- while also showing us why these complexities are mastered naturally by children all over the world, regardless of the language they're learning.

Based on the potential advantages derived from the positive attitude children show towards learning foreign languages, SHAIEx aims to design and develop a web-based educational AHS to enhance language learning at early ages by means of individualized hypermedia tasks and through the potential of its multi-sensorial richness. We claim that an adaptive hypermedia system, such as the ongoing SHAIEX project, could adapt to the main features of educational software for young learners and favourably influence the learning of a second language at early ages.

The conclusions drawn from the data obtained as a result of the factor analysis carried out can be summarized as follows:

The language learning process in the design of L2 hypermedia tasks for early ages must be studied in order to tailor designs to meet children's requirements. Hypermedia tasks should be consequently adapted to young learners, meaning that the tasks are adjusted so as to consider the children's cognitive abilities. Though children may not yet have the ability to categorize or accomplish complex tasks such as the ones involving text information, tasks should be simplified, and textual content should be restricted or postponed till higher educational levels.

As for dexterity with the mouse, the different interaction types (click, click-move-click, double click and dragging) may require previous training and extended practice in the case of young learners. In this context, SHAIEx can provide adaptation in different areas so as to achieve the adaptation and necessary motivation for preschool children to obtain the highest possible benefits from the learning process with technologies. The web-based architecture of the system allows SHAIEx to scale to other educational levels and centralize the adaptation process. The power of SHAIEx as an educational tool also makes it possible to analyze the learning process through the use of ICTs at early ages.

We are aware that computer-based evaluation with primary school children can be an extremely intricate process; however, evaluation constitutes a key point in the design of the SHAIEX Project and one of the future lines of research in order to develop a successful system suited to children's special needs. For this evaluation, we will use the guidelines for usability and fun testing with children –an assessment methodology based on the taxonomy of usability problems proposed and extended to computer game (Barendregt, Bekker, Bouwhuis, & Baauw, 2006).

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Meaningful Digital Storytelling Practices for Learning, Reflection, Creativity and Social Participation

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Book review:

Carmen M. Gregori-Signes & Anna Brígido-Corachán (2015). *Appraising digital storytelling across educational contexts*. Universitat de Valencia.

Digital storytelling (DS) can be considered as a media genre itself. It consists in creating short stories (usually in the form of video between 2 and 5 minutes long) told in first person and using a wide range of digital media and modes of expression. More than twenty years after Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley created them in the US, the practice of DS continues to expand worldwide and in a variety of contexts.

Creating digital stories is neither a simple nor a short activity. On the contrary, it is a complex process that can take several sessions and involves the application of several skills, individually and collaboratively. In the field of education they have come to appreciate this value and have integrated digital storytelling as projects that promote significant and rich learning in people who produce them.

Despite being a book that belongs to a collection of English studies¹, *Appraising Digital Storytelling across Educational Contexts* is an essential book that contains a set of experiences about the application of digital storytelling and its value in different educational contexts and in many ways. It is not just focused on EFL or ESL². Also, it is neither an introductory book on the practice of DS. The editors of this book, professors Anna M. Brígido-Corachán and Carmen Gregori-Signes of the University of Valencia, have brought together different central voices in the field of DS to build a volume that has the virtue of giving a comprehensive and global vision of relevant experiences with DS. These occur in different continents (America, Europe, Asia), in local multicultural contexts and in different educational levels. It is a varied work with meaningful knowledge emerged from real practices that should be interesting to those who integrate or want to integrate DS in their educational praxis.

The assessment of these experiences -the *appraisal*- is transversal. On one hand, it explains the historical evolution of the application of DS in different contexts and through different relevant projects. On the other hand, it includes theoretical reflections to understand the elements of DS and its impact. It also describes innovative experiences in different educational stages, emphasizing a diversity of research and study approaches of DS in education.

¹ English in the World Series, University of Valencia Publishing

² Three of the twelve chapters of the book explain experiences using DS in teaching and language learning.

On a historical level, Joe Lambert's chapter perfectly summarizes the path followed by the *Center for Digital Storytelling* (CDS), a pioneering organization of the practice of DS. It describes four historical periods of the CDS up to nowadays – a creative phase, a literacy phase, a methodological phase and an ethos phase- where digital stories are understood not only from a broad and a generic point of view (neutral digital and media literacies) but especially from an affective and emotional health perspective. It is a vision of DS as a tool to promote welfare, social labour and the empowerment for social inclusion and democratic participation. It places DS as an ethical activity where the most important value resides in the stories explained by people and not in the technical or technological aspects involved in the creation process. The CDS doesn't lay the emphasis on the *digital* but in the *storytelling* part mostly because, and according to Lambert, the *analog* is not any alternative anymore.

On a more theoretical level, José Luis Rodríguez Illera's chapter analyses personal DS connecting them to autobiographical stories and specify revelation aspects of the privacy of the person who narrates, in the light of Goffman's *Theatrical metaphor* that reveals the pass from the backstage to the frontstage; from the private to the public sphere. It indicates the need to identify those markers used by the narrator as a source of expression -including the typical DS hybrid language that mixes oral and written elements of language- and indicate how to interpret the meanings of the story. This is a key theoretical contribution that sets personal DS as a *technology of the self*.

Dolors Palau-Sampio's chapter identifies and describes the progressive atomization of information in newspaper articles, increasingly lacking of stories that help to their comprehension. As a solution, the chapter recommends to provide a specific time and a space in the news so that the reader is able to identify relevant times and places and make sense of narrative journalistic pieces about facts and events.

Apart from this three more historical and theoretical chapters, the book covers different experiences with DS that provide important information about its implementation in different contexts and that appreciate their educational potential. Bernard Robin and Sara McNeil's chapter summarizes a long career at the University of Houston of work done with students in creating digital stories as learning projects, exploring and identifying their educational potential in different contexts. On the one hand they emphasize the creative potential of DS, and on the other, the digital and information literacy skills fostered, such as search, analysis, synthesis, organization and communication of information.

Grete Jamissen and Kristin Holte Haug of the Oslo University College of Applied Sciences describe an iterative experience that uses DS to bridge theory and practice in a program of professional education for future early childhood teachers that reflect on practices using DS. What we find most relevant is the identification of key issues they found during the project's implementation. In such a project that is aims to scale-up in an institution of higher education it may involve significant changes and cause resistances in the organization.

Collaborative work is very useful in DS projects when searching, creating and sharing stories. Ahn Nguyen and Bernard Robin share their vision of the story as a constructivist process. In other words, it is the construction of a story as a process of negotiation of meaning to overcome challenges and the connection of oneself to the world and to social constructs. Here, this socialization process of constructing a DS is a source of learning. This social aspect can also be useful to ESL students for building stories based on other stories told by members of their community. While learning English as a second language students get immersed in their social contexts.

Following this idea of taking advantage of the collaborative work Irena Maureen of University of Surabaya (Indonesia) highlights the important role of Vygotsky's ZPD where collaboration among students can build confidence in them. She proposes several group exercises to make student's thoughts explicit. For example, making a gallery walk to have a look at the storyboards created by their peers and using social networks like Twitter, Facebook and blogs to help in the process of socialization of useful information and help-seeking.

As Lina Lee explains in her chapter, using asynchronous discussion tools can enhance the development of skills to reflect on stories. She describes the case where Spanish as a second language students had to create new stories with VoiceThread based on news related to their

community. First, results show that creating these stories enhances language learning (both speaking and content learning in Spanish) and second, it develops multi-literacy skills. In these last three experiences the use of digital storytelling in ESL and EFL is described as a good practice for enhancing language learning.

In the last chapter of the book Mark Dunford and Alison Rooke describe the *Extending Creative Practice* project. This project extends the practice of DS with a group of elderly people from different European countries and with different socioeconomic levels. As explained in Jamissen's and Holte Haug's chapter, the implementation of a DS project in an organization first needs a *train the trainers* phase to master the DS methodology so that they can work later on with the final participants: the old people. This project aimed to increase their self-confidence and, at the same time, to promote digital literacy skills so they could be able to participate in the 21st century society and reduce the digital divide. This perspective has a direct connection with the the *Center for Digital Storytelling's* ethical vision of DS –the *ethos*-. This project understands DS as an opportunity for creativity of the elderly, to make their voices be heard, to represent their valuable experiences and to have a mutual understanding of them.

Finally, it catches our attention the case-study described in Yuksel Arslan's, Bernard Robin's and Soner Yildirim's chapter because it describes an unusual experience of DS in education: the use of DS in a Kindergarten class of nineteen 6 year-olds in a school of Ankara (Turkey). How is it possible to work with DS with children who haven't mastered the written language yet? The teacher makes stories from students' ideas, drawings, photographs, etcetera, and even curriculum related. What catches more the attention on the results section is the influence of these stories in increasing the self-confidence of children, and especially as a tool to correct unwanted behaviours. When working with these young kids it is essential the guiding role of the teacher to find the story, posing inferential questions to discuss it, to work on its comprehension with students and to create the artistic and visual materials.

The creation of digital stories involves the activation of many cognitive processes and, therefore, has great value in education. In the twelve chapters of the book there are basic theory reflections that analyse the narrative nature of DS and there is a large selection of quality experiences that set the educational potential of DS in different contexts, whether they are used as a bridge between theory and practice in the university, to enhance language learning as a second language or as a foreign language, to facilitate digital literacy processes among young people and old people or to change attitudes and behaviours in early childhood education. It gives evidence of the importance of collaborative work and facilitating spaces for dialogue to find stories, make them better, tell them and share their meaning. And it is also important to mention the strong ethical and moral side of DS. Digital storytelling lets us find connections with our communities and its stories and discover their values and has the power to give a voice to those who haven't any. This is essential for people to fully participate in society and democracy. According to Lambert in this volume, *extending democracy and extending creativity are tied. Everyone's story counts.*

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Massive Open Online Courses: opportunities and challenges from a student perspective

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Book review:

Haber, J. (2014) *MOOCS*. Massachusetts: MIT Series.

This book is based on an experiment carried out by the author with the aim of analyze and explore trends and experiences on MOOC development. Despite the intention of the author to initiate a discussion in which massive open online courses were neither a panacea to the crisis in education nor the terrifying threat condemned by doomsayers, his point of view is generally optimistic and favourable about the expansion of MOOC. It has to be said that in spite of this opinion, discussion around MOOCs is open and there are clear controversial positions.

The author experiment started to complete the same number of courses one would take to obtain a four-year liberal arts degree in just twelve months using only MOOCs and other forms of free learning.

In the introduction of the book the author exposes that probably MOOC starts when in the summer of 2011 Stanford University decided to open up web-based versions of some of its most popular computer science courses to the world. It was the emergence of companies like Udacity, Coursera, and edX, whose technologies could facilitate classes taken by tens of thousands, that triggered a MOOC movement that had previously been relegated to theoretical frameworks or experimental courses. These companies show a type of technological utopianism which say, for example, that in ten fifty years there would be only ten institutions in the world delivering higher education.

As the author expound, from the beginning boosters and critics of MOOCs could use data to support their pro and anti-MOOC arguments. For critics, high attrition rates were an easy target, given that fewer than 10 percent of people who signed up for a MOOC tended to take it to completion. From teacher point of view, the amount of work involved and the challenges inherent in trying to teach tens of thousands of students simultaneously became the basis for a new set of concerns. Moreover, with no clear way to ensure that a student enrolled in a MOOC was the one actually doing the work, it was difficult to claim that any massive open course constitute the equivalent of a traditional semester-long college class. On the other side, and as the author exposed, it's difficult to argue that no good can come out for the world's most successful colleges and universities making classes taught by skilled and enthusiastic professors to share their knowledge available to anyone with an Internet connection.

The second chapter of the book attempts to place MOOCs into a broader context of trends in traditional and online learning. When looking for precedents, one could go back to the protestant reformation in XVIth century Europe when the printing press or to correspondence courses first popularized in the 1840s. Broadcast media, first radio in the 1920s and then television in the 1950s also created opportunities. Most recently, the first course in 2008 to earn the title of a

MOOC was “connectivism and connective knowledge” taught by Stephen Downes and George Siemens. This connectivist model sees knowledge and learning through the lens of how information becomes incorporated into the brain. Moreover all material generated by the professors was optional, with students free to use what they liked, create and share their own curriculum materials. The term MOOC was created by David Cormier who helped facilitate Downes’s and Siemens’s connective learning project and coined the term during an EdTechTalk interview. People involved with some of the earlier experiments in online learning use the term xMOOC to distinguish the newer massive courses from the connectivist MOOCs (now referred to as cMOOCs) that came before.

In the third chapter the author take a look at all of the parts of a course and how they fit together in order to answer the question of what constitutes a MOOC.

- When the content of a class will be consumed by thousands of students of differing abilities the rules that define meaning when these elements are linked together in a traditional classroom may no longer apply.
- Regarding lectures, research based on evidence of performance might demonstrate the effectiveness of the lecture format; MOOC developers have taken to heart the importance of breaking lecture material into shorter segments.
- The other issue that MOOC creators have had to contend with is the notion of openness, like intellectual property rules. Professors have been experimenting with different methods to make required part of their courses in ways that do not leave institutions vulnerable to copyright-related lawsuits and most easily applied in courses where reading material is already publically available in legal or free formats such as offering students time-limited electronic editions of textbooks, for example.
- Another component of the MOOC courses is the online discussion. MOOC developers have tried a number of methods to support community formation, for example most courses kick off with a forum, online conferencing, discussion forums, “office hour” videos or “learning” hubs”. Beside these examples, there is a general consensus that MOOCs still need to find the means to create intimacy within classes taken by thousands of students.
- Regarding assessment, it often consists of short quizzes, multiple-choice form, automatically scored exams. All these techniques are created with the assumption that classes consisting of tens of thousands of students require evaluation to be performed by someone other than a professor. In this sense, most assessment of subjective material is done via the mechanism of peer grading. As a final comment of the reflection, the author maintains that until challenging assessments designed to verify and reinforce learning become a higher priority, MOOCs may continue to be perceived as a lighter alternative to what currently takes place in the less massively enrolled physical classroom.
- In reference to the course organization, there are two approaches to scheduling, with courses put on a calendar in which students engage with the same material each week until a fixed deadline is reached or the “on demand” courses, in which students can start the course whenever they like, with no fixed deadline for completing the material.
- Regarding the certification and payment, especially in those MOOCs carried out by universities is another controversial issue. In the case of Stanford University, the institution and the course author came to an agreement that allowed the university’s name to appear on a carefully worded certificate of completion stating explicitly that the online course should not be considered equivalent to an actual paid-for Stanford for-credit course.

All this variability needs to be taken into account when entering the fiery debate over whether or not MOOCs should be treated as the equivalent of traditional college courses.

In the fourth chapter the author explores the issues and controversies related with MOOCs. Although MOOC supporters rarely mention them, dropout rates in these courses are about 90 percent. And this opens a question: online sign-ups should be treated as representing the same

level of commitment as enrolling a traditional college course? The author of the book explains that MOOCs are free and the process for signing up for one involves little more than providing an e-mail address and password. Regarding this, Coursera's statistics make differences in between: number of enrolled users, number of unique students who logged into the site at least one after sign-up and active students last week.

While providing younger students access to MOOCs remains an important goal for MOOC creators, as the data exposed in the book shows, the natural audience for MOOCs seems to be an older and more educated cohort interested in advancing their learning. As the author suggests, maybe those data change if students could obtain something with genuine "cash value" in the educational marketplace for completing a MOOC class, such as formally recognized college credit. In this sense, the author highlights that the wide variation in level of demand emphasizes the importance of independent accreditation when determining formal college course equivalence for a MOOC.

The fifth chapter is focused on the research and experimentation taking place within individual massive classes and what such a culture of experimentation might contribute to the overall MOOC project. The first research is related with statistical data on how many students are enrolled, what actions students do or how much time they spend doing different activities in the MOOC platform. Other research is related with the demographics surrounding the student body of a MOOC course. In addition to these descriptive studies, researches are also looking at new ways of defining educational behavior based on the unique environments of large-scale. As the author concludes, most of the research into MOOC has delivered what MOOC supporters would categorize as good news. But other researches demonstrated, for example, failure rates much higher in MOOC based courses than in conventional classes on the same subjects.

Another question MOOC developers are trying to answer through experimentation is about the business model of these courses and how to get these free learning tools to turn a profit. Apart from providers such as Udacity, Coursera or edX there are other economic players with a stake in the success or failure of MOOCs, notably the colleges and universities who create the courses. Moreover, new platform providers or LMS providers explore how to open up courses on their system to the world.

As Haber explains, much of the discussion of MOOCs as a potential substitute for a traditional college education grows out of concerns that colleges and universities are pricing themselves out of a market and will need to be replaced with different, less-expensive alternatives. The MOOC phenomenon is also analyzed as an alternative for the spiraling problem of colleges and universities related with a debt bubble that looms as the next great financial crisis

Regarding the pedagogical experiments, the final results are likely to demonstrate that massive open learning is good in some situations and bad in others, the academic drive for answers combined with the scientist's readiness to accept and even celebrate negative results should be used to guide MOOCs to the point where they can have the greatest positive impact.

Finally, the sixth chapter explores the future of MOOCs. As the author concludes, there is continuing and legitimate concern over how far MOOCs or any other technology-based educational solution should be allowed to impinge on existing educational structures. Moreover, despite the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley the real debate about the efficacy of massive open learning is taking place within the academy. A number of commentators clearly saw them as an alternative to traditional colleges and universities that were becoming increasingly expensive and decreasingly demanding. However, the author qualifies as understandable that educators have expressed concerns over the quality, consistency, and academic rigor of the growing number of alternatives to institution-based classroom learning, pointing out how uncontrolled diversification could end up watering down the educational and economic values of a diploma.

Talking about "nontraditional learners" Heber notes that when MOOCs are implemented in atypical learning environments, they are often part of a blended learning environments when students watch videos together in the same physical location and then spend the rest of class discussing the content. This "atypical environments" are usually rural areas, areas with few hours of electricity, etc.

In the closure of the book, the author explains in detail their aim to achieve a philosophical grade only completing MOOCs. After this experience, Heber suggests that if a program allowed him to complete that many courses in one year rather than four, the online courses he took must be easier than the ones someone would go through in a traditional four-year program. Beside this, he recognizes that after this experience he has now enough knowledge on modern philosophical concepts to use them in the analysis of this book. And "might it be fair to consider myself the equivalent of a graduating senior with a BA in philosophy who is now capable of applying important philosophical principles to different subjects and different aspects of life?" The discussion is open

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