

The Power of Play: What Online Games and Virtual Worlds Can Tell Us About Learning and Literacy

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Abstract- Online Games and Virtual Social Worlds are illustrating a shift in the way learning is happening. They not only impressively display our transition from an analogue, spectator culture to a fully participatory culture, but also offer an area that enables the natural development of skills needed in a knowledge-based society. Players are learning to give voice to new dispositions within networked worlds which are well suited to effective communication, problem solving, and social interaction. These environments seem to have too much potential for learning professionals to ignore. But Virtual Worlds should not be used to automate existing learning approaches and models: A virtual classroom with virtual students and a virtual PowerPoint deck should not be the end-game for learning in Virtual Worlds. To avoid these pitfalls, it is necessary to develop a deep understanding of emerging digital cultures and the role of play in our lives.

Keywords- Learning, Online Games, Virtual Worlds, Participatory Culture, Play, Learning Ecologies, New Media Literacy, 21st Century Skills, Value Networks.

Remarks: The full paper may be found in www.charm72.com