

Creating spaces to play in digital learning

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Games based training has the potential to improve engagement and skill development in VET. In this study 3D immersive game environments were developed by aligning learning outcomes with gameplay scenarios. Trials were undertaken and learners reported a preference for games-based learning compared to traditional delivery methods. They also expressed greater understanding for both the learning content and the relevance to vocational outcomes. The aim of the research was to explore alternative pedagogical approaches to improve engagement and knowledge transfer. The customisation of the game environment allowed learners to take on workplace identities, and through virtual work-based situations learning was contextualised and expertise developed through cycles of learning and practice (Yelland, 2007). Well designed games can cultivate problem solving skills and understanding through the inherent characteristics of gameplay, which include being pleasantly frustrating, offering safe havens to explore and learn, offering contextualised skill development and supplying information on-demand (Gee, 2007). The study explores the notion that games-based learning caters for the learning styles of VET students who are: more visual than verbal, in that they like to watch and see rather than read and listen; hands-on learners who prefer to learn by doing and by practicing; characterised by socially contextualised learning- these students prefer to learn in groups with other learners; not self-directed learners, but like to have instructor guidance and a clear understanding of what is required of them- this is experienced through the scaffolding nature of learning through gameplay (Smith & Dalton, 2005).