

Dr Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen (email: sen@itu.dk) is Assistant Professor in the Department of Digital Aesthetics & Communication, IT University of Copenhagen. His Ph.D. was in computer games and learning and he has written two books about learning, education and computer games. Simon is also Managing Director and Founder of 'Serious Games Interactive' - www.seriousgames.dk

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Educational use of computer games

'Serious Games' develops computer games with an agenda that goes beyond pure entertainment. We believe that computer games can be engaging and enlightening on an endless number of current issues.

Our first production built on these principles is 'Global Conflicts: Palestine'. The game takes its starting point in the conflict in Israel/Palestine, where students arrive as a 'green' freelance journalist. They have to cover the conflict for their newspaper maintaining neutrality, but as they dig deeper they will find it increasingly hard to stay neutral. The target age group is 13+.

Use of the game

Students work in groups of two, taking the role of a journalist in a 3D world where they cover the conflict through a series of missions. By interviewing and taking action, the students have impact on the development in the area and will constantly be forced to relate to their own and other people's point of view. During their work of collecting information, the students will have to make controversial decisions that will challenge their beliefs.

The game can be used in history and social science subjects. In addition, the game can be used in subjects such as geography, religion and psychology because of its interdisciplinary content. There will be many different access points into the theme depending on focus, level and skills. The students will be able to use the game at home so that the teaching in school can be supported.

The game-parts of the game consist of

interviews and collection of quotes from these interviews. The students need to pick these quotes carefully since the quotes have to support the angle, which the student has promised the newspaper to support.

In addition, their article has to have news value so that the article can have a conspicuous place in tomorrow's paper and thereby get a high journalist score. This demands that the student understands the content and is able to relate to it. This form of gameplay integrates the gaming part into the learning part - without compromising game or learning quality. Furthermore, the game is constructed so that it can be integrated into regular lessons with teacher presentations, teamwork, tests and debriefing.

Research

'Global Conflicts: Palestine' integrates learning with an alluring game. To achieve this extensive testing on the target group has been done parallel with the development of the game. The target group includes students in the secondary school, high school students and the teachers in those establishments.

In conjunction with the research a paper was produced with test results from a play test with the prototype on three high schools. These results show that 85% of the students find that the course was interesting, 89% would like a similar course again. But, maybe most interesting, 58% of the students find that they learned more from this course than from a normal course. At the same time, evaluation shows that the students learn to see problems in a broader perspective and value the personal stories.