There's more to gamification than just playing games

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Video games have expanded rapidly and created a large and growing industry since the 1980s.

Video games are a pervasive element of today's society: as recent reports from Entertainment Software Association show, about two-thirds of Americans play video games. This phenomenon is not merely significant for children and teenagers. Statistics show that the average age of video game players is above 30 years old.

As Millennials – also known as generation Y, generation N, or the net generation – enter the workforce, their mindsets and behaviours regarding their working environment have become important areas of study. It is essential for higher education institutions and employers to understand the differences and mindsets of young students and employees.

One significant characteristic of Millennials is the fact that they learn by doing; they tend to find traditional learning and working environments boring, which negatively influence their performance and their encouragement to do well.

For several decades, the military has used games extensively, not only for simulation of complicated conflicts, but also for training officers and soldiers.

By the end of the 20th century, other industries began following the lead

of the military to deploy video games to advance their agendas. Today, video games have been deployed for various applications in many sectors beyond the military such as government, education, corporations, and healthcare.

When we talk about using video games not solely for fun, two overarching categories emerge: first, "serious games," and second, a more recent category known as "gamification."

Serious games go beyond simple simulations by employing common elements: points, badges, competition, and so on. Gamification aims to integrate game design elements in non-game contexts – that is, making the performance of a particular task more game-like.

Regardless of the approach through which an organization deploys video games, all games share certain design elements, such as competition.

In the early stages of our research, we observed the engagement of MBA students in a competitive video game, which is designed for teaching students and employees to work with SAP's Enterprise Resource Planning system.

The research on the use of video games in educational and organizational contexts is in its early stages. We believe that our research on the role of environment in video games can be a significant contribution to this developing research. From a practitioner's perspective, designers working on serious games and gamified systems will benefit by obtaining richer understanding of the factors that can lead to deep involvement of their users.

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