

THE POTENTIAL OF SIMULATED PRACTICE LEARNING FOR PREPARING CHILD-CARE SPECIALISTS¹

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ABSTRACT

Games-based learning has grown in popularity recently and has been recognised as a motivating, rewarding, innovative and interactive form of learning. The present paper presents the piloting results obtained via a specially designed 3D simulation game for rehearsing the skills needed in a child-care context, the Tiny Oaks 3D game. 131 workers in child-care domain completed pre and post training questionnaire on three areas of professional knowledge and skills: knowledge and understanding, application of practical and professional skills through reflective practice and transferrable skills. In addition, the post-training form of the questionnaire contains questions regarding the usability of the simulated environment. The results suggest that the simulated practice environment meets a positive response on part of the piloting professionals who work with children. However, this positive effect should be viewed mainly in the light of helping the studied professionals to reach a more realistic and deeper understanding of their own knowledge and skills which is potentially beneficial for their future professional development. On the whole, we consider that these results prove that, although being highly qualified and having rich professional experience, the trainees have benefitted from the participation in the simulated environment training in the direction of acquiring improved professional self-awareness. Game experience did not influence the usability of the simulated environment for learning. Therefore, the value of simulated practice training seems to be independent from their level of digital skills or their being used to gaming or not, which is a very encouraging result.

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