



BOOK REVIEW

Games and Education: Designs in and for Learning

Hans Christian Arnseth, Thorkild Hanghoj, Thomas Duus Henriksen, Morten Misfeldt, Robert Ramberg, and Staffan Selander, editors

Boston, MA: Brill Sense, 2019

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Educators are striving to assist learners in developing critical thinking skills that nurture innovative creativity in order to prepare them for the challenges and problems of life. In *Games and Education: Designs in and for Learning*, editors have assembled a masterful work to equip teachers with games and strategies to transform learning from boring and rigid to engaging and dynamic. The text was compiled by Scandinavian researchers seeking to guide readers on an expedition from theory to implementation in an effort to aide teachers with “designing new learning environments” which utilize “digital games across a wide range of settings and subjects” (xi). Editors arranged *Games and Education* into two sections, “Designs in Learning” and “Designs for Learning,” in order to present an innovative pedagogy of game-based learning through the use of digital games, simulations, and gamification.

Contributors to the “Designs in Learning” section focus on how developing and supporting learner transformation over time occurs within a framework of social interaction. Researchers present findings on design perspective, broadening of game-based learning ideology, participant organization of their learning environments, and increasing complexity of participant educational practices. Johanna Oberg opines game-informed design by role-play to be a viable means to promote critical thinking and active participation among students. She discovered students, when given the opportunity to be co-researchers, “gained experience in finding and expressing opinions, analyzing results, and engaging in decision-making” preparing them for future challenges (9). As detailed in the forward, emotionally-charged memories become long-term memories which can lead to patterns of learning important for a successful future (vii). A unique aspect of this type of learning is the transfer of power from teacher to pupil leading to an increase in learning responsibility by the student (85).

The “Designs for Learning” section includes chapters written by researchers covering topics regarding environmental shaping, tools for learning, active teacher roles and group dynamics within game-based education, and student development of games as a source of learning. Christian Arnseth, Thorkild Hanghoj, and Kenneth Silseth created a dialogic pedagogy as a means for educators to make learning increasingly relevant and interesting through game-based and play-oriented teaching. They discuss the importance of the teacher’s role in game-based learning, covering numerous essential topics from planning to teaching to evaluating (137). In this review, I have provided a look into the vast array of topics covered in *Games and Education*, choosing to highlight chapters focusing on the two extremes of student and teacher power in game-based learning.

Professors at undergraduate and graduate levels will find *Games and Education: Designs in and for Learning* a thorough asset to their understanding and implementation of game-based learning. The authors provide practical tools to aid teachers in navigating the world of digital games, enabling them to choose, execute, and analyze game-oriented learning designs that match the educational level of their students. Researchers hypothesize that game-based learning instills essential critical thinking skills and creativity, preparing participants to navigate the complex problems and challenges of today’s world.