

QUDWA 2017

Teacher Talk in collaboration with OECD

“Gamifying Teaching: What works?”

Sunday, October 8th, 2017, 3.50-4.30pm

Panellists

- **Janet Hayward**, Headteacher, Cadoxton Primary School, UK
- **Jane McGonigal**, Director of Game Research and Development, Institute for the Future, USA
- **Mithun Kamath**, CEO, Arc Skills, UAE

Moderated/Facilitated by

- **Alejandro Paniagua**, Consultant, Innovation and Measuring Progress, Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD

Sustaining and promoting student motivation and engagement in school is increasingly becoming a challenge for teachers. Can the gamification of teaching help students develop 21st Century skills?

A poll conducted during the session found attendees believed 78% of their students played games outside of school hours.

Moderate gaming has been shown to stimulate student cognitive function and psychosocial development, and it also gives them an opportunity to try something new, be terrible at it, then become adept over time, which is incredibly valuable experience in learning and in life, said McGonigal.

Yet it can be incredibly hard for teachers to embrace gaming as a method of teaching, or applying knowledge learned.

“It’s easy for the children because they are very adaptive, they jump into the whole thing with an enormous amount of enthusiasm,” said Kamath. “With teachers it’s not that easy, because for them it’s a significant paradigm shift. They need training, mentoring and coaching to make it better.”

“It’s a mix, it’s a blend,” said Hayward. “We’re opening up to a whole new world and it’s our responsibly to harness that.”

While teachers and parents may want their children to do anything else other than play video games, seeing them as an utter waste of time, their negative attitudes toward the participation could be leading to addictive or unhealthy gaming behavior, studies have shown.

It is important for teachers to get very inquisitive about the games their students are playing, asking specific questions about why they enjoy it, what skills make a better player and what challenges are involved.

“Soft skills and psychological strengths are really built up by a wide range of games,” said McGonigle. “They also learn self-efficacy, that feeling and belief that I can take actions that will help me improve and learn better and achieve my goals.”

In addition to traditional games, there are some great educational varieties that can help children learn, connect and communicate with their community and boost their learning. They include Mathletes and Citizen Science.

“We need to talk to our learners about what excites them and how can we tap into all of their talents and all of their passions,” said Hayward. “And we need to look more widely at what we want our schools to be.”

The panel encouraged teachers to learn to play the games their students played most, as a basic starting point. “It’s not about gamification,” said Kamath. “It’s about deciding what you want to teach and then what to use.”

“The first thing to do, the very first step is for everyone in the school system, is to play the games that your students love,” said McGonigle. “You need to have a first-hand experience of the system so you can understand the type of engagement that is capturing the attention of your students. I can’t tell you how many teachers who played Pokemon Go when their students got obsessed with it and understood what was so great about it. If you actually play the games, you will build up that internal knowledge to determine what’s good or design your own intervention. That’s where you have to start, you can’t just listen to an expert or read a blog - your students will respect you if you do.”

Main Takeaway: The majority of students are playing some form of video games, and how teachers and parents react to their hobby can have everything to do with whether it becomes a healthy, learning activity or something more addictive and pathological.