Power Explorer:
Is Indoctrination Right?

Paschalina Skamnioti
University of Applied Sciences of Bremen, Germany

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Persuasive games are often designed for social, political, or environmental purposes to promote particular values and behaviours. In this chapter, the author analyzes the manner in which values are conveyed to the player through the persuasive game Power Explorer, a mobile game for reducing household energy consumption. For the analysis the author takes into account the diverse approaches of Values Education and the criticism they have received. In particular, a) the author illustrates the similarities of the values education designed in Power Explorer with the traditional approach of Character education, and b) the author raises ethical issues regarding the design, the objectives, and the effects of games for change using persuasive technologies[1], in terms of both the individual and the society.

VALUES EDUCATION IN GAMES FOR CHANGE

Games for change (G4C) are designed with the objective to have a social impact regarding political, social and environmental issues. Building awareness upon real-world problems such as poverty, violence, climate change, or human rights is a sensitive task. All these problems are, in fact, rooted in our society's values, which consequently originate from our personal ethical values, as active citizens, motivating and guiding our behaviours. The question is how do we learn and 'change' values intentionally?

Values Education is a field that examines *how* the moral person (i.e. the player) should be educated. It also touches upon the layers of the *what* (i.e., which values

should be promoted?), and the *why* (i.e., what are the end-state goals?). Generally it is defined as "the conscious attempt to help others acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that contribute to more personally satisfying and socially constructive lives" (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p.14). However, what is considered 'good' for the individual or the society is not always so clear. The conception of how the moral person should act and think in modern society can be complex and diverse. Throughout the history of Values Education there is substantial literature suggesting, analyzing and criticizing various approaches for educating values; reflecting at the same time changes in the society and its perceptions of education and morality.

It is significant, therefore, when we talk about designing games with sociopolitical and environmental focus to take into consideration the theories and practices of Values Education. We need to examine the particular ways that values can be reflected through such games, as well as to recognize and be able to deal with some ethical concerns: Who decides which values G4C aim to promote? Which are the educational objectives for the moral agent? Are the players given the opportunity to develop moral reasoning or to discover their own values? What exactly is the change envisioned by G4C, and to what extent are the problems addressed?

For answering in the above questions, I have developed the theoretical Model VEGA (Values Education in Games Analysis). VEGA is the result of a thorough study of the main approaches of Values Education and their connection to the design of G4C. In this chapter, I employ VEGA for analysing the persuasive game Power Explorer. Power Explorer, designed by Interactive Institute in 2009, is a pervasive mobile game for promoting energy awareness. It aims at changing the attitudes of players by measuring their household energy use in real time.

The chapter is organized as follows: First, I present the objectives of the game, the gameplay, and the results of the game trial. Second, I introduce the VEGA Model, clarifying the three main approaches of Values Education according to their basic differential characteristics. Third, I proceed to the analysis of the game. Primarily, I illustrate that the design of Power Explorer corresponds to the approach of Character Education; an indoctrinative approach targeting to instill the 'right' values to the learners by focusing on their behaviour. Given that Character Education has received much criticism, I continue by putting forth significant ethical issues that should be taken into account when using this approach of educating values.

My perspective is that of a game researcher, with some experience in designing games with environmental objectives[2]. VEGA Model is developed during my Postgraduate Studies. In the current analysis, although I appreciate the work that has been done in Power Explorer, I highlight significant inadequacies of the game, under a values educational scope. My intention is, on one hand, to find explanations and ideas for solutions, provided by the field of Values Education. On the other hand, is to offer the ground for a deeper understanding of the ethical and educational aspects

27 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/power-explorer/113485

Related Content

Control-Based Database Tuning Under Dynamic Workloads
Yi-Cheng Tuand Gang Ding (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 333-338).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/control-based-database-tuning-under/10841

Data Mining with Cubegrades
Amin A. Abdulghani (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 519-525).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/data-mining-cubegrades/10869

Database Security and Statistical Database Security
Edgar R. Weippl (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 610-616).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/database-security-statistical-database-security/10884

Semantic Data Mining
Protima Banerjee (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1765-1770).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/semantic-data-mining/11057

Rough Sets and Data Mining
Jerzy W. Grzymala-Busseand Wojciech Ziarko (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1696-1701).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/rough-sets-data-mining/11046