



Career Choice With the Serious Game Like2be

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ABSTRACT

Choosing a career is an important biographical event for adolescents. Toward the end of compulsory education, they must decide which career path they want to pursue. The serious game like2be was developed to support adolescents in this individual career choice process. In a quasi-experimental intervention study with 809 adolescents, like2be was evaluated for its effectiveness in career choice classes at the lower secondary level. In addition, a teaching concept for the application of the serious game which included additional teaching materials was analyzed. The data show that like2be is an effective medium for broadening personal career choice horizons, especially when it is pedagogically well-founded and integrated into career choice classes. Although the effectiveness of like2be in stimulating intensive reflection on one's own vocational aptitude or a gender-sensitive attitude towards occupations is limited, the present study shows that like2be has major potential for supporting the process of career choice among adolescents.

KEYWORDS

Career Choice, Career Orientation, Intervention Study, like2be, Serious Game

INTRODUCTION

The choosing of one's career is a pivotal moment for young people as they enter post-compulsory education. It signifies their initiation into a specific career path that is intertwined with personal development and life experiences. Career choice is not a one-time event but rather a multi-layered process related to individual personality that begins in early childhood (Brown & Lent, 2013). The closer adolescents get to the end of compulsory education, the more intensively they have to engage with their future career, as their first career decision inexorably looms.

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For adolescents to successfully make the transition from compulsory schooling to post-compulsory education, a period of career exploration is particularly important (Hartkopf, 2013). Research shows that young people who engage in intensive career exploration during adolescence are particularly successful in making an individually appropriate transition to the world of work (Kracke & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001; Neuenschwander et al., 2012). The digital learning game (serious game) *like2be* represents a promising opportunity for this. Specially developed for young people in the middle of their career choice process, *like2be* offers young people a playful opportunity to immerse themselves in a career exploration phase in order to explore their own career choice and to broaden their career horizons (Makarova et al., 2017b). Additional teaching material is available to add depth to the game's content.

Since the module *Career Orientation* as a cross-curricular career choice lesson was incorporated into the Swiss school curriculum (Lehrplan21) at the lower secondary school level (D-EDK, 2014, 2016), *like2be* has already been used several times at various schools. Owing to the game's innovative approach, empirical educational research has regarded *like2be* with significant interest, finally evaluating the game for its effectiveness. The results indicate that integrating the serious game *like2be* into classroom activities stimulates cognitive processes or provides mental challenges that lead to an increase in knowledge about occupations (Keller et al., 2023).

However, it remains unclear how or to what extent *like2be* should be integrated into career choice classes and whether its use leads to greater learning outcomes than traditional¹ teacher-prepared instruction. An intervention study was therefore conducted with adolescents in lower secondary schools in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. The study aimed to show to what extent *like2be* supports adolescents in their individual career choice process by helping them to a) increase their knowledge of occupations, b) improve their self-perceived fit with certain occupations, and c) have a more gender-neutral view of occupations. In addition, the data could be used to infer how *like2be* can be effectively applied in the classroom and how important a methodological-didactic teaching concept and the additional teaching material are.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CAREER CHOICE

Career choice is a significant milestone in life. Herzog et al. (2006) defined career choice as a dynamic and multifaceted process in which individuals, acting as active agents, gradually navigate and determine a career-related path. Throughout this process, they encounter various challenges and receive both societal and institutional restrictions and expectations. The theories presented in what follows examine each facet of the career choice process from a variety of perspectives; the section concludes with a synopsis.

Holland's (1997) Typological Theory of Career Choice states that individuals are more likely to prefer jobs that match their personality traits and interests. These characteristics are categorized into six groups represented by the acronym RIASEC.² Each individual is theorized to have a unique combination of these characteristics, which can be represented by their personal RIASEC code pattern and which may match certain occupations. High congruence between an individual's RIASEC code pattern and that of an occupation leads to an appropriate person-environment fit and increases the likelihood of success and job satisfaction (Holland, 1997).

While people are continuously influenced by reciprocal interactions with the environment (Swanson & Schneider, 2013), Holland's theory is considered rather static and may not fully account for the dynamic nature of career choice. Super's (1994) Life-Span, Life-Space Theory suggests that career choice is a lifelong developmental process depending on both personality and self-concept development. Adolescents first identify their career-related personality traits, interests, skills, talents, values, strengths, and limitations. They then gather information about the professional world and acquire the necessary skills through school and work experience. Based on their exploratory phase, they form a vocational self-concept that influences their career choice decision (Super, 1994).

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