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Departmental innovation

Wii-learning: an innovative technique for teaching sport psychology

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Recent research has advocated the use of game-based activities as an efficient vehicle for learning. In an extension to this area of investigation, researchers at Leeds Metropolitan University's Carnegie Faculty have examined the effects of traditional games (e.g., Hoopla, Darts) and active video games using the Nintendo Wii (e.g., Wii Sports Resort; Sonic and Mario at the Olympic Games) on the reported learning experience of students enrolled on an undergraduate sport psychology module. The project has provided initial evidence to suggest that active video games represent an effective and engaging way of teaching theoretical issues related to psychology.

A total of 74 male and female Level 5 students participated in four practical sessions designed

to help demonstrate and explain the impacts of psychological factors (e.g., anxiety, stress and arousal; self-confidence and self-efficacy) on sports performance. Two practical sessions involved traditional games, and two practical classes utilised active video games on the Wii. The order in which students participated in these practical sessions was counterbalanced, whilst the traditional and active video games were matched according to task type and difficulty. At the end of each practical class, students were asked to rate the session in terms of their enjoyment, interest/engagement, and perceived usefulness to their studies. Students could also provide written comments to explain their experience of the session.

Initial findings have revealed that active video games are just as effective as traditional games as a means of enhancing the learning experience of undergraduate students. Additional evaluation of quantitative and qualitative data is currently in progress; specifically, to examine the impact of teaching activities involving active video games on students' academic performance.

The increased sophistication of active video game technology provides teachers with a novel way to engage students. The preliminary findings from this project highlight that active video games represent an innovative and cost-effective resource for enhancing students' appreciation of new and complex ideas. Further work in this emerging area of technology-enhanced learning could be extended to the teaching of other psychology domains (e.g., health, developmental, occupational). In turn, future research of this nature may lead to findings that have important implications for the wider Higher Education community.

The findings of this project will be presented at the British Psychological Society's Annual Conference in Glasgow on Thursday 5th May, 2011.

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