Enhancing learning experiences through authentic and engaging means

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Definitions

**Authentic Learning** – when real world activities can be replicated, the “kind of activities people do in the real world” (Herrington & Kervin, 2007, p. 5).

**Engagement** – Student engagement measured from three perspectives; affective, behavioural and cognitive as outlined by Jimerson, Campos and Greif (2003).

- **Affective**: Asking how student’s felt (questioning/survey)
- **Behavioural**: Observing students (through their actions whilst answering questions, contributing to discussions, participation and monitoring whether they stayed on task)
- **Cognitive**: Discovering student’s attitudes, perceptions and beliefs (discussions/questions/surveys)
Our journeys -

- Each set out on a journey to engage students with authentic learning by the use of virtual worlds
- Ended up at different destinations
How it started

Such a magic vehicle for people to develop skills
Key Turning Points in the Journey
2010 was Resource Useful
Social Networking and Games

5 Currently Active Users
1 Not Aware of

Score

Facebook
Itunes
YouTube
WOW
Second Life
Post Census Leakage

Percentage

2007  2008  2009  2010  2011  2012
Revisited Goal

Key points:

- I have got most of the low hanging fruit
- How could I develop an authentic learning experience that would overcome barriers I had?
  - Institutional issues
  - Student acceptance
  - Resource investment
  - Resource intensive
Play to Your Strengths

- Best received resource – Assignment (Practice Set)
- A practice set is a pretend business designed for students to take source documents and undertake all accounting actions needed to prepare the Financial Statements
- Practice set is engaging judging by spike in videos accessed at key assignment milestones
- Low resource demand after set up
Practice Set

- Still Authentic Learning – simulating real life
- No institutional barriers
- Easy to control and modify
- Minor additional learning curve for some students

AND

- Still is a step toward virtual world
Major Problem

Plagiarism

• develops poor habits in students
• Involves significant paper work
• Robs students of learning opportunity
Result

• Practice set no longer an assessment task (but there are assessment tasks based only on it)
• Build unit and resources around practice set
• Enables relevant, timely and action oriented feedback
### Research – 2008 to 2011

**Number of Students Who Attended Second Life Learning Activities – 2008-2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attended voluntary virtual world learning activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=12</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attended compulsory virtual world learning activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>n=0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total attended virtual world learning activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=12</td>
<td>n=98</td>
<td>n=190</td>
<td>n=223</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The percentages represent the number of students participating in the activities compared to the total number of students enrolled in the units.*
Authentic Learning in a Virtual World

- Virtual excursions
- Guest lecturers
- Role-play activities
- Web quests
- Learning basic building and scripting skills

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Examples of Authentic and Engaging Learning

Opportunities for using Virtual Worlds

presented by Sue Gregory aka Jass Easterman

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_b2Rq1LvqQ
Role-play activity: [http://youtu.be/ipFvT0jAkL0](http://youtu.be/ipFvT0jAkL0)
Engagement in a Virtual World

Affective – Feelings

“It has been one of the highlights of my entire uni life! This is my 7th year of uni…. and only performing in operas has been better. This has been a life-changing experience.”

Cognitive - Perceptions and beliefs

I had a defining experience last week when we sat down in that open air lecture space and I sat on one side and the rest of you sat on the other side. Suddenly I felt lonely and without thinking got up and moved to where you were all sitting. And then I thought that felt so real!

Behavioural - Observable actions or performance

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<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students signed up to attend</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of students in attendance</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average time spent inworld each session</td>
<td>2 hours 51 minutes (advertised two hour long sessions)</td>
<td>3 hours 20 minutes (advertised two hour long sessions)</td>
<td>2 hours 27 minutes (advertised one hour long sessions)</td>
<td>2 hours 34 minutes (advertised one hour long sessions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of A4 pages recorded of inworld conversations</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>174</td>
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Impact of Learning in a Virtual World

3,576 students

Grade comparison between students that attended sessions in Second Life and those that did not

Second Life Group (n=232)
- 55.2% Distinction
- 24.1% Credit
- 16.4% Pass
- 3.0% Fail

Non Second Life Group (n=3004)
- 36.6% Distinction
- 32.0% Credit
- 11.2% Pass
- 10.4% Fail

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## Contact Information

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- [http://www.virtualclassrooms.info](http://www.virtualclassrooms.info)