This is the accepted version of a paper presented at 2th European Conference on Games Based Learning, ECGBL 2018.

Citation for the original published paper:

Location-based games as a key to unlock the classroom
In: Proceedings of the the 12th European Conference on Games Based Learning, ECGBL 2018 Sophia Antipolis, France

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:miun:diva-34644
Location-based games as a key to unlock the classroom

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Round table discussion at the 12th European Conference on Games Based Learning 4-5 October 2018, SKEMA Business School, Sophia Antipolis, France

Abstract: Around a century ago John Dewey (2015) questioned the idea of schooling with a mandatory focus on classroom based studies only. Today, after a century of rapid technological development and vivid didactic discussions the classroom focus still remains. New portable, interconnected and omnipresent 21st century technology opens up possibilities for a spatial independent ubiquitous learning in the spirit of Dewey (Cope & Kalantzis, 2010). This study had the aim to explore and discuss the potential of using location-based games as a catalyst for outdoor activities in formal education. In what ways might a location-based and augmented reality unlock the constraint of traditional classrooms?

The overall research strategy has been the case study approach where data has been gathered by spy glasses, hand-held video cameras and group interviews. Two outdoor teaching and learning activities were the two main case units. In the walking sessions K12 students played Pokémon Go to learn about local history and mathematics. Around 1 TB of video clips have been thematically analysed with the use of the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software tool NVivo. Patterns and themes found in the video analysis have been compared to themes in the answers from the group interviews.

Analysis themes related to location-based gaming were Discussions, Outdoor activities and Gaming and gender. Findings indicate that the use of a location-based game can be motivating and a way to unchain students' sit-down 'enchairment'. However, game-based outdoor activities seem to have more reliable learning outcomes if they are combined with follow-up activities in the classroom. Physically active students also tend to have more active discussions than sitting students in a classroom. Finally, boys and girls seem to have different collaboration patterns during the gaming sessions.

Keywords: Location-based games, Outdoor activities, Game-based learning, Mobile learning, Enchairment
