

Creating games that promote Physical Activity (PA)

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Obesity is a serious problem; young people do not reach daily levels of PA recommended by government, regardless of Physical Education (PE) lessons. There is “not enough strenuous activity in PE school (...) [and] teachers tend to talk too much in sessions (...). The government (...) will put competitive sport back at the heart of school life” reports Richardson (Richardson, 2013). What if the strenuous PA was to be done outside of PE? What if pupils had the choice to decide whether to do competitive sports, to be part of a group or not? What if PE lessons were actually focused on having fun and playing games?

This interdisciplinary Design led research aims to find a way to tackle the ‘intention-behaviour gap’ (Sheeran, 2002) within the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen): even when people have intentions of changing behaviour, only 53% will actually implement these intentions. Theories enabled to find out what the motivational factors for behaviour change are, and the practice to understand how these can be manifested to engage young adolescents.

Using design methods enabled to embed this knowledge into a card and board games aiming to promote PA, specifically Moderate and Vigorous levels & Non-Sedentary behaviours (Start Active, Stay Active, 2011). The idea is that if players engage with the fun of the games they will do PA, core component of the games: according to the players’ PA levels different currencies are given, increasing the chances to win the games.

This paper reports a Design evaluation of the games, tested in a secondary school over 6 weeks, with 15 participants, as part of their PE lessons. It investigated the engagement level of the participants, their PA levels, and the poten-

tial of the concept. The games were less engaging than expected but the study also attempted to explain why and how engagement could be improved.

References

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