



Euroversity Recommendations for Learning in Virtual Worlds

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, it aims to present an overview of some of the main characteristics of virtual worlds and virtual reality and their application in educational and research contexts in different subject areas (e.g. languages, mathematics, geometry, geography, architecture, physics, biology, engineering, digital design and more). With reference to its educational potential, the paper will focus on a discussion of the immersive and participatory features of the environment. From the point of view of research, an overview of the ways in which the platform can be used in different research contexts both as a place for research (research locum) and as a tool for research and data collection. In the second instance, this paper will discuss the process of developing recommendations for teaching and learning as developed under the Best Practices Framework of the Euroversity Network. The process was developed through the systematic collection and analysis of Case Studies collected under the Network. It involved the description of best practice, teacher interviews and the administering of student questionnaires. The paper will then discuss some of the preliminary results. The recommendations will address areas such as the rationale for adopting virtual world platforms, institutional constraints, funding, task typology, teacher training, ethical issues, technical issues, course management, learner assessment and course evaluation. A special focus will be placed on the development of 3D spaces and objects for education and the use of machinima (virtual world films) for education. In conclusion, the paper will also provide a discussion of the Euroversity findings and recommendations in relation to the recommendations produced by similar international collaborations such as the 2013 Distance Education Hub final report on 3D immersive worlds in Australia and New Zealand.