



Player professional development: A case study of teacher resiliency within a community of practice



Antero Garcia ^{a,*,1}, Mark Gomez ^b

^a Stanford Graduate School of Education, 520 Galvez Mall, Stanford, CA 94305, USA

^b University of California, Los Angeles 1320 Moore Hall, Box 951521, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521, USA

HIGHLIGHTS

- Teacher co-developed professional development focused on understanding principles of game design.
- Despite administrative support, teacher's time was disrupted by school meetings.
- Teachers shifted to a collective resistance of district mandates to focus on student needs.
- Game-focused PD and resilience supported teacher leadership and classroom pedagogy.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 June 2016

Received in revised form

4 May 2017

Accepted 10 May 2017

Keywords:

Professional development

Teacher knowledge

Gameplay

Secondary schools

Urban education

ABSTRACT

This case study follows seven high school teachers over the course of a year engaging in “*Player Professional Development*.” As these teachers studied game design principles for classroom instruction, this study looks at how their gameful learning intersected with administrative disruption of teacher time. Building on literature about communities of practice, teacher resiliency, and game-based learning, these findings highlight how structural barriers to teacher-led PD affect feelings of teacher burnout. Ultimately, the teachers in this study shifted from a stance of “playing” to “escaping” PD, reflecting a general attitudinal shift to structural PD challenges at their school site.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

We time-traveled at a coffee shop, escaped from an alien quarantine zone, became victims of werewolves, and crashed an office space to plan the first annual Game School LA Game Jam. All the traveling we did from downtown Los Angeles to Monterey Park and back made the day feel like an epic adventure quest. - Jerry, Game School LA music teacher

Jerry's reflection on a whirlwind day of playing, “escaping,” and planning as part of a seven-teacher team illustrates key activities in

a year-long teacher inquiry process that mixed teacher-led PD with principles of gaming. Over the course of an academic school year, Jerry and six other teachers worked toward developing “gameful” identities (McGonigal, 2015) which brought “the strengths and skills [developed] during game play to real-life goals and challenges” (p. 121). Yes, this was fun and games, but it was also *work* and intentional, inquiry-driven learning. As faculty at a high school focused on principles of game-play and game design, these teachers were focused on developing game-based skills that related to the classroom needs in their school while also developing their agency as educators.

The efforts of the teachers in this study point to how games are seen today as a powerful source for youth learning and engagement. Though interest in games for learning has grown substantially in the past decade (Gee, 2004, 2007; Ito et al., 2013; Squire, 2011), forms of play and gaming have been a substantive and persistent aspect of constructionist approaches to learning (Dewey,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: antero.garcia@stanford.edu (A. Garcia), markgomez@hawkinshs.net (M. Gomez).

¹ Permanent address: Stanford Graduate School of Education, 520 Galvez Mall, Stanford, CA 94305, USA.

1938; Farne, 2005; Papert, 1980). And while there is often a problematic focus on technology as a “quick fix” to persistent educational inequities (Cuban, 1986; Philip & Garcia, 2013), gameplay and game design are poised to significantly and positively change the landscape of what learning in public schools looks like (Salen, Torres, Wolozin, Rufo-Tepper, & Shapiro, 2011; Toppo, 2015).

At the same time that gaming is sought as a solution to long-standing educational “debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006), the teaching profession in the U.S. is increasingly over-taxed, underfunded, and seldom recognized as a highly-esteemed career choice. Though there have always been opportunities for powerful youth learning outside of schools and there have always been labor challenges within the teaching profession (Goldstein, 2014), some case studies suggest that now more than ever before, is a time when mutual interests in games and learning offer an opportunity for reimagining the possibilities of play in school contexts (Salen et al., 2011; Toppo, 2015). This manuscript details the efforts of seven urban high school teachers to leverage principles of gameplay and game design for professional development (PD) purposes. Engaging in co-designed research (Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014) about the role of gaming and agency, these teachers spent an academic year studying games in a teacher-led PD. As such, this manuscript speaks to the challenges of sustaining gameful learning and teacher-driven PD within a U.S. urban school.

1.1. Teacher inquiry questions

Developing a plan to construct a “*player* professional development” model that would be enacted over the course of the 2014–2015 academic school year, the seven teachers in this study created research questions to guide their inquiry. Jointly written by a university researcher, Antero, and one of the teachers that co-designed this PD model, Mark, these questions guided the gameful approaches to PD and learning at the school site. Looking at the year-long journey this teacher cohort underwent and the limitations between teacher-driven and district-mandated PD, the research questions in this study allowed teachers to adapt to the occasional uncertainty of planning and learning within this particular urban school context:

1. How do teachers foster and sustain play for adult learners in PD contexts?
2. What barriers impede authentic game-based and play-based learning within this school site?
3. How does teacher agency and resiliency grow within a gameful approach to PD?

This case study highlights one school's yearlong engagement with inquiry-driven and gameful approaches to profession development for supporting teaching and learning in schools.

This study contributes specific analysis of which gameful practices support teacher-led PD; it highlights challenges within the messiness of school bureaucracy. What began as a collective inquiry of gameful approaches to teacher learning and classroom instruction ultimately transformed into analysis of the limitations of implementing contemporary approaches to teacher learning in large urban districts. With school administration stymying the initial momentum of this PD, this study highlights how the socio-cultural contexts of schools can get in the way of research-supported approaches to teacher learning. Through analyzing teachers' year-long efforts to institute a “*player* professional development,” we identify barriers to sustaining teacher-led PD. Ultimately, we attempt to expand existing research on teacher inquiry models and on the challenges facing game-based engagement in schools.

2. Literature review

Exploring the enactment teacher-led PD focused on gameful learning in this manuscript, we first highlight how research on game-based learning shaped the PD model teachers undertook. This study's exploration of *player* professional development is built on existing research on game play (McGonigal, 2011; 2015), game design (Fullerton, 2014; Schell, 2014), and game theory (Huizinga, 1949; Sutton-Smith, 2001). In addition to focusing on the role of games and learning, the literature that informs this study focuses on how this group communicates, collaborates, and learns. We describe previous research on teacher inquiry that shaped the practices and organization of participants in this study. Below, we focus on scholarship on “communities of practice” (Barton & Tusting, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991), teacher-led PD, and teacher inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). In addition, we highlight how multifaceted constructions of resiliency shape teachers' sustained growth across a school year. By expanding on this research base, this study seeks to offer a specific explanation of the challenges and affordances of teacher-led and gameful PD.

2.1. Gameful learning and design

The teachers in this study developed PD to guide gameful identities and to learn how such practices could be brought into classroom learning. This understanding is built on the principles articulated by game designer Jane McGonigal (2011; 2015). In particular, McGonigal notes that:

Being gameful means bringing the psychological strengths you naturally display when you play games—such as optimism, creativity, courage, and determination—to your real life. It means having the curiosity and openness to play with different strategies to discover what works best. It means building up the resilience to tackle tougher and tougher challenges with greater and greater success. (2015, p. 2)

Alongside McGonigal's definition of gameful, this study recognizes that among myriad definitions, games can have transformative roots (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Flanagan (2008) notes that games are “social technologies” (p. 9) which shifts from individuals merely playing games to more fundamentally understanding the “systems” (Gall, 1977) at work that drive forms of play.

Though there are large bodies of diverse games studies research, the emphasis in learning contexts tends to focus on video games and digital aspects of play (Gee, 2007; Squire, 2011; Steinkuehler, Squire, & Barab, 2012). At the same time, there are non-digital forms of play that have been explored and applied to classroom contexts (de Koven, 2013; McGonigal, 2011).

Studies have looked at numerous aspects of what games *mean* for learning. For example, research has focused on the academic learning found in video games (Squire, 2011), how games support collaboration (Pfister, 2014), the complex and layered literacies of gaming (Garcia, *in press*), the civic opportunities of games (Kahne, Middaugh, & Evans, 2008), the systems thinking that emerges from games (Berland & Lee, 2011), and how games reflect complex production-centered participation (Rafalow & Tekinbas, 2014). This is not an exhaustive list of the ever-growing inquiries into games and learning.

And while there is a diverse body of research on gaming and learning, how to mindfully apply the findings from this research within schools has been much more limited. Not until recently have systematic approaches to school-wide game design been embraced. Most notably, Salen et al.'s (2011) *Quest to Learn: Developing the School for Digital Kids* explores the key concepts and

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4941524>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4941524>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)