

Abstract/Proposal Title:

Hidden Curriculum in Military Training Simulators

Abstract/Proposal description:

In this paper we will introduce a key concept of curriculum studies, the 'hidden curriculum'. This concept will be used to reflect on the way in which military training simulators are perceived. Nowadays, soldiers train in virtual worlds that are overwhelming by their very nature. The logic of the developers is 'blackboxed' and therefore not easily accessible for users. Not many developers are prepared to open it and validate the internal workings. It is very difficult to create a distance from the virtual worlds because there is no satisfactory frame of reference to judge it. This is very problematic because training simulators influence the manner how soldiers understand the complex environments in which they have to operate.

Implications for Practice:

Military training simulators make new forms of learning and training possible. Many papers are written on the great achievements and gains. This paper focuses on the losses. This loss is not necessarily problematic, but at the least trainers should be aware of it because simulations have the potential to change the way how people understand their world and act within.

Significant Outcomes/Insights:

In this paper a framework is presented how to analyse the 'hidden curriculum' of training simulators. Hidden does not mean hiding or secretly, but it points at "those parts of the environment that influence the experience of students but that either are not accounted for or cannot be accounted for in curriculum planning" (Marsh and Willis, 1999). Training simulators deserve special attention because they invoke performance rather than representation. Soldiers train in virtual worlds and do not have the time nor space to doubt their experiences. Trainers and educators should be well aware of these shortcomings to be able to develop a responsible educational or training program.

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