

Social Functions of Games in Modern Society: Educational Perspectives

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Abstract. The authors analyze in this article questions of the place and role of games in humans' life and society. In particular, we focus on the needs of human personality in the game and social functions of games in history and contemporary society. We investigate the relationship between games and gaming technology with the processes of globalization, mass culture, and consumer society. This is especially relevant for cross-border regions since they are unique establishments experiencing the growing impact of globalization and regional integration. As part of the social functions of the game in today's society, the paper considers the place and role of games in the social professions and related social activities. We argue that it is an important technology in the training of experts in the field of social professions and technologies. The authors conclude that there is a strong need for a national public policy in the area of legislation and regulatory practices, additionally focusing on controlling the spread of gaming technology in modern society, especially among children and young people.

1. Introduction

The concept of "game" is to be understood as the existential phenomenon since games cannot be separated from the human culture [8]. The game is an activity in which any product (material or ideal) is not performed, except for business and design games. Consequently, the game is a kind of unproductive activity, where the central motif is in the process itself [11].

Let's remember that every human activity has many motives and directions. Consequently, there is stimulated by a number of different purposes. And if organic and material motives impel man to activities aimed at meeting the natural needs of the self-preservation and development of the organism (procreation, food, clothing, housing, etc.), one cannot forget other motives. There are three of them: (a) functional motives are met through a variety of cultural forms of activity; (b) social motives are designed to meet the needs to take a certain position in society, achieving respect and recognition; (c) spiritual motives underly the activities related to human self-improvement. Implementation of these needs and is done, among other things, in the gaming practice. And with the development of the personality changes motivation activities, motives are becoming more spiritualized: organic material, creative social, moral motives [5]. The game creates conditions for maximum realization of the essential properties, capabilities, and abilities. Its specific features are identical, equivalent to the understanding and actualization of the vital needs of the individual. The interaction of people in modern society acquires virtual character in virtue of intensive informatization. There is a new social space, a new area of human life – virtual reality.

The researching of this phenomenon covers the significant quality of problems in the frames of different humanities' areas (philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, psychology). One such problem is

the formation of new virtual postmodern culture (with a non-linear, fragmented, non-deterministic, associative logic of thinking) and its phenomenon such as an online game. The goal of the work is to prove that online game as a phenomenon of the virtual culture is an important mean of self-identification and the formation of personal identity in the modern world. Thus, the authors consider theoretical foundations, practical applications, and provide highly valuable recommendations.

2. Theoretical Foundations

The need for the game can be called an eternal necessity [2]. Closely related to this problem are the numerous theories of the origin of the game. We shall touch upon only some of them. So, following Plato, who considered the game one of the most useful classes, many philosophers and researchers have expressed hypotheses about the “usefulness” of gaming activities. According to Herbert Spencer, the value of the game is that it satisfies a need in the discharge of vital energy. His followers believed that the game not only serves a compensatory function but also has a balancing activity, helping to restore the balance of life. According to K. Gross, the game is the eternal school of behavior, a means of self-education.

The game is repeated in the experience – repeatedly referring to it, the player experiences the pleasure of repeating, is looking forward to it. F. Beytendeyk, on the contrary, believed that the game allows one to meet the demand for novelty, implements original desire for liberation, merger playback. There is an interesting recapitulation theory (abbreviated repetition of the main stages of human development) and anticipation (anticipation of the future) in the game. The idea was first put forward by G. Holl, and Wallon was the second one. Analysis of philosophical, pedagogical, and psychological literature on the theory of the game allows one to imagine the reasons for its appearance, its wide range of values for updating the needs of development and self-realization in the gaming activity, reflecting the diversity and richness of the world of human relations. According to modern researchers [2], there are many functions of functions.

First, emetogenic and relaxation functions. The game is not just entertainment. It is able to remove or reduce the physical, emotional, and intellectual tension and fatigue, which are caused by the load on the nervous system strong emotions, active mental or physical labor.

Second is the compensatory function. From the point of view of logic, the first feature of the game is perhaps the power compensation; it is not used in the human struggle for survival. The game acts as a form of sublimation-displacement activity. According to Freud, as we know, this is a defense mechanism, allowing a person to adapt to focus energy on some other object, to shift their impulses so to be able to express them by socially acceptable activities [3]. With the advent of computer games, the compensatory potential of game actions was greatly enhanced. The game is increasingly becoming a reality, analogue, with no risk to life, and the whole gamut of thrills present.

The developing function is the third one to be reviewed. While playing, a person gets an opportunity to develop the inherited physical, intellectual, emotional, creative potential. The game is used by the parents, educators, teachers as a form of child development and learning. Adults participate in game action contributes to the development of such qualities, which were either underdeveloped or are important for a man in his practical activity. Different games are aimed at the development of different qualities. Each game has its own hierarchy of objectives, while at the same time there are games which are of a complex character. A number of qualities are developing computer games (especially strategic and simulation): a reaction time, a speed of thinking, an ability to concentrate.

Then there is also a communicative function. The need for communication is one of the fundamental, basic human needs, one of the manifestations of its public nature. A game can be called a school of communication and sociability because it is a communicative activity. The game compensates for insufficient creative and constructive forms of interaction, it brings them to this cooperation. It is also important that the game is more inclusive and accessible communication factor. And next to the need to

communicate the need for updated and isolation. In turn, its implementation will give the individual an opportunity for self-knowledge, self-development, and self-expression.

The function of self-realization, self-knowledge, and self-identification is the fifth one. The process of the game is always a space for self-realization of its members, a unique opportunity for human practice. In the game, a person checks individual strength, possibilities for free actions. The game prompts to self-knowledge and creates conditions for individual internal activity. A person realizes the need of belonging to the society of certain specific (group of colleagues on hobby and friendly company of like-minded on the subculture, etc.). At the same time, the game allows one to try any mask, to play any role, to identify as a hero of any age, any social environment, any gender, etc.

Also, one could identify the socio-cultural function. Such actions (even virtual) introduce the players into a real context of complex human relationships. In many games, the participants are taught them the alphabet and the basics of existence in society, comprehend the rules of partnership and competition, fair play and leadership, learning to work in a team. The games often simulate the most complex real-life situations, participation in preparing a person to solve problems in life, sometimes seemingly hopeless. The game is not accidentally called a social simulator. It serves as a powerful means of socialization and includes both a socially controlled process of purposeful influence on the personality and the process of spontaneous, natural.

A diagnostic and therapeutic function is the last function we would like to mention. The game is projected and disclosed determining the basic foundation of personality. It diagnoses and reveals any other human activity, as precisely as possible in the game participant behaves (its physical strength, communication skills, erudition, intelligence, creativity). Taking into account experts' opinion on why people play most intensively and lose their composure, gaming therapists used games for removal of troubles in life, for the correction of moral relationship, for approval and encouragement for a person to overcome various difficulties encountered in behavior in communicating with others in teaching.

3. Perspectives and Applications

Of course, realizing the needs of playing games (and it may be a minor or dominant, situational, short-term or sustainable, periodically actualized) takes concrete form, depending not only on the psychophysical, educational, and morale playing but also from the dominant culture in the society, ideology, values, and goals. The game is like every single cultural form always bears all the burden that comes to a person's life, along with the community a particular person belongs to.

Undoubtedly, the modern civilization, which the researchers increasingly refer to as a consumer, greatly provokes in people their intrinsic hidden negative properties [10], [12], [13]. In our opinion, the spirit of profit, money, and wealth, global society of mass production and mass consumption, eventually becomes a factor of progress in games, revealing the destructive nature. And these processes are very characteristic of cross-border regions, of course. In objectified, alienated, philosophical terms, a consumer becomes a general factor of propagation and gain mass society in our life in all its spheres, making society primitive as a whole and depriving it of a harmonious perspectives [10], [12], [13].

Striving for increasing profits, the consumer society constructs in the minds of different generations, through soft technologies and a variety of games including the satisfaction of the needs of the negative [9; 10]. This is a situation where the game becomes gambling, technology enslavement, human objectification in whose interests or external, economic, political, military and so on, all the same. Gambling, as a process of objectification of human consciousness and behavior is in the pre-constructed consumer purposes and values. Gambling, by means of soft technologies, consumer advertising, for example, is an important factor in the formation of consumer sentiment, consumer practices in the behavior of citizens and the modern Russian society. Proceeding from these attitudes and practices beyond the moral and social values of certain, national security of any modern society is concerned with the benefit of their citizens and of their own civilization and cultural well-being and sustainable

development [10; 12]. Consequently, the important context of our work is to analyze the unity and complementarity of games, gaming technology with the activities of the social professions in modern society [14].

A variety of problems facing the modern specialist in the field of social professions (school or university teacher, a social worker, a psychologist, a conflict, a social educator or doctor, etc.) are becoming more diverse and dynamic. The now global society creates an entirely new class of human and social problems of a completely new challenges, and new professionals have to work with the person, including in the sphere of the individual problems, family and even entire social groups, such as children, young people and the poor, etc. These trends requires the use of a variety of techniques and methods of work. Consequently, game methods are gradually becoming most popular and effective social professions. It is not surprising, since it is the game is the most organic and most developed, recognizable, attractive views of the social activity and communication [9; 10; 12; 13].

In this article we clearly show that because of information technologies, modern human can exist in virtual and real. The virtuality is becoming not simply a mediator between a human and the world but truly the world itself. We analyze a virtual nature of online-games, such as the method for forming individual identity of a person in the epoch of postmodern in socio-philosophical aspect. The author also researches the destructive role of online games in the process of person's self-identification. Many persons are not able to imagine life without the Internet, computer games, virtual-governmental communities, etc. Interpersonal communications, education, creativity, art, leisure, game, entertainment, provide the freedom and all forms of self-realization have passed in the sphere of electronic culture. Somebody chooses independence from society, immersed in a virtual world, which is created by them or replaced in the underground community. The dominant state of our lives become chaotic, acceleration, alternative, uncertainty, boosted innovation, comprehensiveness, pluralism [2; 5; 7]. The previous value is inevitably transformed in these conditions.

People change their nature ("a person who uses, consumes and entertains") [6, p. 26]. A modern human being really becomes "homo ludens." There are gamers' communities, "roleplayers," "spielers," for which the virtual games are the main form of escaping from reality, virtuality and virtual vacation interesting and preferable to the real world. Online games, along with attributive signs of this phenomenon, have an easy access, an actual distance from the subject, presence of an artificially created reality, liberal contents, openness; remoteness, mixing and eclectic, fragmentary, mosaic, innovation, technocratic [2; 4; 7; p. 86]. The game, which has always been a special simulator, today becomes a deputy life compensator. In its new capacity, it serves, first of all, the hedonistic function, as a way of entertainment, a pleasant leisure. It's another function is communicative one. Also, the game is the most important means of avoiding the problems of life, when an individual's attention is completely absorbed by virtual experiences. In the context of our researching we pay attentions to such feature of the game such as the creation of your own virtual status, which gradually begins to be perceived as authentic playing.

4. The Case: Social Workers

Consequently, a social worker is in the need of assistance (taking into account his or her age, gender, social status, education, religious and national characteristics, as well as, of course, individual characteristics). A social worker is a representative of various services and organizations. Here, one may need to play the role of a lawyer, a police officer, a psychologist, a medical worker, psychiatrist, venereologist, police inspector, a notary, an employee of the migration service, a teacher, a representative of the guardianship, the media, human rights activist, an official at any level [14].

Such role-playing games are designed to promote the formation and skillful practical application of constructive interactions between an expert (a social worker in this case) and a person who finds him/herself in difficult life situations, as well as between workers of different social services aimed at

solving customers' problems. The feeling of the game increases "in" the participants in such situations. Game is a relatively safe "space activity" [4], and the actions and responsibility for what is happening are the "real" thing. Many types of games can act as specific behaviors aimed at the development of certain personality traits. Consequently, gaming technology is an important factor of socialization and re-socialization of the person in modern society. Undoubtedly, they have to be actively used by professionals of social professions as a key method of social assistance to a person [14].

We have no doubt that the role-playing games, in particular, contribute to social adaptation, formation of socially healthy and active person, motivated to work on themselves, become the ways of prevention and correction of deviant behavior, reducing the chance of playing join the ranks of those who need social care and guardianship. Of course, this is only possible when the main principles of the organization are the environmental and cultural, humanistic and socio-moral orientations, strengthening the focus on personal development, particularly in the ability to self-organize [14]. Only then gaming technology fully executes inherent in it socially significant functions, including such as developing, orienting, training, communication, compensatory, stimulating, therapeutic [1; 7]. Game practices help to cope with aggression, fear, depression and anxiety, emotional experience of rejection, negative "self-concepts," inappropriate behaviors, etc. [1; 7].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that gaming technology is extremely important to the social aspect of the training of such specialists who are capable of using all "virtual" resources in their development practices and social care resources. Gaming technologies have become not only one of the foundations of preparation of experts in social professions. Also, they are an important tool to help a suffering person. That is, there is a strong need to update the positive functions of games and game technologies, primarily in the social professions.

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