Elementary School Teachers' Suggestions on Development of Digital Games

Tülin Haşlaman

Nowadays, digital games are used as educational tools to improve learning and teaching processes. Digital games increase motivation towards learning and enrich individualized learning experiences. It also contributes to the development of problem-solving skills, knowing that learners can apply what they learn in one context in other contexts.

As digital games provides an in-depth engagement to the targeted subject, it also strengthens the functioning of working memory that works with long-term memory.

It also supports learners' critical thinking skills in their decision-making processes by developing high-level thinking skills through real-time brainstorming. In other words, effective and well-designed digital game-based learning environments contribute to the development of learners' goal setting, planning, problem solving and critical thinking skills. Taking all these benefits into consideration, it is envisaged that the effectiveness of learning environments can be supported by integrating digital games with learning and teaching processes.

It was seen that researches on the use of digital games in learning and teaching process are not enough. In this context, it is important to take the views of the teachers firstly in determining the qualities of digital games to be used in learning environments. For this reason, in this study, it was aimed to take the views of elementary school teachers on the use of digital games in learning environments. In this direction, the following questions were asked to the participants:

• How and where do you find digital games that you use in your lessons?

• By which criteria do you choose digital games that you use in your lessons?

• For which purposes do you use digital games in your courses?

• What are your expectations from digital games?

In this study, the view's of elementary school teachers regarding the use of digital games have been examined. How and where to find digital games, what criteria they choose, what goals they use, and expectations from digital games are taken with the use of open-ended questions.

226 elementary school teachers who are working on different primary schools in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, participated in this study. 64% of the participants were male (n = 144) and 36% (n = 82) were females. The data was collected via Google forms editors.

Elemantary school teachers' views about how and where they found the digital games are examined. Some of their responses; EBA and similar web sites, forum environments, internet, virtual stores, MEB approved web sites, teacher friends suggestions.

Elemantary school teachers' views about according to which criteria, they choose digital games when they use in their lessons are examined. Some of their responses: to be creative, to be safe, to develop social relations, to help students, to improve attitudes, to develop mind and attention, to be fun and useful, to be readiness level, to be appropriate to the course content, to avoid violence, to support engagement, to improve thinking fast and the ability to make the right decision, to related with everyday life, to support learning.

Elemantary school teachers' views about purposes of the using digital games in their courses was examined. Some of their responses: to support individualized education, to rainforce the learning subjects, to have enjoyable lesson, to support permenant learning, to realize achievements, to create different expectations, active participation, to encourage the engagement of the lesson, creating a more permanent and effective learning environment, to make sense of concepts, to evaluate free activity times, to contribute the socializing through brainstorming and collaboration with friends, to increase attention and focusing level, to diversify in-class activities as the classes are crowded, to help to learn coding.

Some responses of the participants about expectations from digital games are: to be fun, to use exploring methods in the learning process, being engaging, supporting course objectives, increasing attention and focus, to increase mathematical thinking skills to make synthesis, to use technology, to increase the motivation, to support the strategic thinking, to develop the knowledge and skills, not to be addictive, to force thinking, to acquire software skills, to encourage finding alternative solutions to the pending problems.

As a result, classroom teachers also express that the effective learning experiences and academic achievements will be more effectively supported by the effective integration of digital games into the learning and teaching process.