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Second Life

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses Second Life, an interactive platform where college students can take advantage of learning opportunities. My interest in distance education presents Second Life as a very useful platform that could promote education at the university level. Through a very modern internet interactive platform, it has the potential of becoming a very useful avenue where virtually all subjects can be addressed. As an educator, I have found the use of Second Life more positive than negative. Second Life helps the students to explore the world around them using the virtual world, by combining the use of games and other interactive instruments. Virtual worlds are not limited to games, but, depending on the degree of immediacy presented, can encompass computer conferencing and text-based chat rooms. Literature shows that there is an ever-increasing growth of people accessing Second Life for educational advantages.

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Introduction

Looking at the potential of Second Life as a tool for learning, I am inclined to believe that its interactive nature, a three dimensional environment, is a very nice way to start the lesson by integrating games and activities for students. According to Atkinson (2008), Second Life is a computer game that helps to explore the virtual world. It is a kind of dream, especially for college students may behave differently in Second Life than in real life. The virtual world will be as important as the real world in terms of teaching students. For example, students will have more opportunities to participate within software than in real class and online software is social presence, communication, motivation and enriching learning experience. Also, Second Life allows academic institutions to create their own virtual, tailored content to talk to the exact desires and interests of the learners they provide for. Second Life runs on any operating system.

The negative thing for schools is that Second Life costs thousands of dollars a year and distracts students from learning by giving them opportunities to date in the simulated world. As an educator I will not teach students this way of dating because it is not an educational issue. However, unlisted disadvantages are just as crucial as these advantages. Second Life has an avatar where one can choose a body and a face with a personality, which does not aid in education. It is a distraction from learning when a learner sees the girls or boys and so on. It is also expensive, costing a lot of money for the virtual land and construction of the virtual world. It is not shared and not freely distributed; only the company controls and owns it. It has a high sense of play that distracts from, rather than contributes to, learning. Also, it should not be used while a teacher is in the class unless the teacher can explain how to use it. People who have old computers cannot participate in Second Life. Hopefully, it will become a non-business model for novelty use in the future people tend to develop themselves and their competencies in Second Life to be qualified for a job and for promotion. People should consider that they might want to get involved with changing business and industry sectors. To face these changes, people should know how to use software

programs like Second Life. I agree with having Second Life in the adult education system. Also, Second Life is interesting, new, exciting and creates virtual space. It is software that creates an environment where humans can fly, which cannot be done in the real world. It is also useful because a teacher could teach a student from a distance and make them feel that they are not far from the teacher by providing information and answering their questions. It allows experimentation that is not possible in real life. It is now possible to explore new lands and ideas in a virtual world.

According to David Bell (2009), one focus of Second Life is the commercial landscape. It focuses on the emerging virtual vernacular of Second Life. One should be able to understand and appreciate the kind of language used within the Second Life concept. To be a part of Second Life, one needs to learn and understand the language and expressions generally. Every field of study has peculiar phrases and vocabulary it uses, and one must become acquainted with particular terms to successfully use Second Life. However, Second Life is gradually becoming capitalist in outlook, which may push aside potentially interested people from accessing it.

The Second Life platform is also being progressively polluted by the use of internet-related foul language which offends the sensibilities of some users. The likelihood of a good resource being misused by people masked behind computers is great, causing all manner of criminality and language devoid of decency; this occurs from the everyday integration of Second Life by its users. Bell believes that we must understand user culture before Second Life can be applied to adult education. The author compares Second Life to a classic architectural landscape, mapped out clearly to allow users to navigate the terrain more easily. One must fully understand every area of knowledge that prevails there.

According to Dan Power (2007), there are some main advantages of using Second Life for adult education. It is easy to access and does not cost much money; even the download is free. Also, it gives lots of flexible content for teachers and students. It has the capability of voice, video and so on. It has impressive management and creativity enhancements: avatars

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look like whatever the user wants. The time compression of Second Life can speed up activities and make the users enjoy each activity because time goes faster. Learning and participation are encouraged by integrating data from various Web sources into Second Life. People experience Second Life and those experiences impact real life. A Second Life meeting can be both enjoyable and memorable. A walk through a proposed factory can help one understand what it will be like when built. However, this author also mentions some major disadvantages of using Second Life: learning time and training costs, numerous distractions, grieving, pranksters, spam, technology problems, poor chat applications, resistance to use, and a growing SL addiction are all examples. The use of Second Life for education needs to be carefully planned.

According to Christian Wagner (2008), Second Life gives students opportunities to learn information and enjoy it. It allows students to negotiate with people. Students may take many classes through Second Life and study more tacit information. Though much time may be wasted, Wagner was impressed with the creativity of his students' work and their ability to learn how to manipulate the new medium. The use of Second Life does not have to be for profit. For users, creating their own virtual world to represent the concepts to be learnt is potentially very educationally valuable.

In the article, "The Potential, the Pitfalls, and the Promise of Multi-user virtual Environment: Getting a Second Life," the author says that Second Life is not only a place for activity, but also a place where people can socialize and interact with new worlds. In 2006, teacher-librarian Peggy Sheely developed a model can be used that Teen Second Life called Ramapo Island to promote meaningful applications of technology in learning. Second Life addresses English literature, the Globe Theatre, history, culture, language, and economics through a virtual world. Heid and Kretschmer's (2009) study uses 3-D MUVES currently being developed in education, but there are not good precedents for doing that. Researchers in the article try to integrate the program in an educational setting and develop the right way to do so. Also, they try to isolate what works and what does not, breaking the user population up into five groups: teachers and students in school environments and in higher education; teachers, trainers, and students in vocational training; stakeholders, trainers and learners in adult education; tutors, and participants in intergenerational learning projects. The methodology has two phases, the target group and the learning

methodology. The results are presented as under construction in Second Life.

In conclusion, I have become knowledgeable about the advantages and disadvantages of using Second Life for adult education. I have also realized that it is a tool that is for students and teachers to access, and it makes learning more attractive and effective. It is also interesting to note that there are possibilities for integrating data from various Web sources into Second Life, and the fact that the users of this tool are expanding rapidly, thereby, encouraging active participation and experiential learning. Interest shown in Second Life and its wider exposure in business and education research are leading to new issues worth examining in Second Life as a tool for learning. Researchers from other traditions are increasingly becoming interested in using Second Life for various reasons, one of which is the quality of the tool which is an essential feature, especially when compared to other software programs used in many schools. Given the advantages of Second Life, I strongly believe it will be an asset when used in adult education. The experiences of users show that Second Life really impacts the life of its users. However, the increasing 'capitalist incursions' do not augur well for its users who have to pay large sums of money to enable them to access it.

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