

Gamifying the Sports Management Classroom

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-295 - (440)

All authors:

Tara Magdalinski (corresp)

Date submitted: 2015-01-21

Date accepted: 2015-03-30

Type: Professional Practice

Keywords: gamification, online and blended learning, rewards, curriculum redesign, student engagement, autonomy

Category: 19: Online and Blended Sports Management Teaching and Learning

Synopsis:

This paper discusses the role gamification can play in sports management education and how it might be used to create playful learning environments that motivate student engagement. It draws on experiences of delivering a gamified, blended module and uses key outcomes from the project to consider how sport management educators can embed critical elements.

Abstract:

AIM

Trying to engage learners in compulsory modules can be difficult, and a variety of educational strategies have been developed to motivate and inspire students. A promising innovation to cross into the educational setting has been gamification, a method that applies ideas, systems, techniques and experiences of games to non-gaming environments. "Gamification" has found widespread appeal as marketers seek ways to encourage consumers to engage voluntarily with a brand beyond casual glances at advertisements. Companies offer loyalty schemes, rewards for frequent purchase, points, badges and any number of other ways of earning status with the brand (Zicherman & Linder 2010). Gamification is more than simply playing games, and, in education, it is less focussed on the ephemera and more on the basic structural and design aspects that prompt deeper engagement with learning (Deterling et al 2013). This requires careful restructuring of the curriculum to embed game design and mechanics into higher education, to create defined immediate and longer term goals, choice in the goals one pursues, autonomy to engage (or not) in a way that suits the individual, feedback that encourages learning and meaningful rewards that inspire continued engagement. This paper discusses the role gamification can play in sports management education and how it might be used to create playful learning environments that motivate student engagement. It draws on experiences of delivering a gamified, blended module and uses key outcomes from the project to consider how sport management educators can embed critical elements.

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

For serious and casual gamers alike, gaming becomes an immersive experience, where players learn and improve based on in-game choices and actions, and the feedback they receive from succeeding or failing in quests. Players are rewarded for achievements and milestones, and individually or cumulatively, these rewards may unlock additional skills and tools to further their progress. These collectively create a learning environment where players are nudged towards end goals without them necessarily noticing, and where players are excited to try to overcome challenges to progress further in the game. The question for educators is how can a similar compelling learning environment in and around the classroom be recreated (Dominguez et al 2013).

In many ways, game design mirrors curriculum design, and the two share four critical features: “(a) clear learning goals, (b) opportunities for practice and reinforcing expertise, (c) monitoring of progress, and (d) adaptation to the level of mastery of the learner” (Morris et al 2013). Games are further characterised by their provision of a safe space to test one’s capabilities where there are no serious consequences for failure. A player can try to unlock a secret door, fail, receive feedback, try again, fail again and keep going until they have learned or practiced enough to succeed. Instant feedback means that players are able to adjust and learn from their mistakes immediately. The provision of rapid, meaningful feedback is critical to the success of a game-based curriculum as is the “freedom to fail” (Stott & Neustaedter 2013), whereby students are encouraged to test their knowledge or apply their developing skills without serious consequences whilst receiving guidance through rapid feedback.

This presentation outlines gamification and considers how sports management learning and teaching can adopt critical features to inspire student engagement. It uses a case study approach to outline the implementation of gamification principles to examine the efficacy of using a games-based approach both in and outside the classroom, using online platforms. Finally, it discusses how students can take greater control over their learning by choosing learning and assessment options that match their learning objectives.

CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

This presentation is addressed to academics working in sports management or other cognate areas. It is expressly designed to consider how gamification can be embedded in higher education curricula, though there may also be value for practitioners interested in alternative modes of training.

IMPLICATIONS AND LEARNING

This presentation introduces participants to the concept of gamification, how it can be used in educational settings to engage students and inspire learning, the risks and benefits of offering rewards (points) rather than component grades, and the workload considerations that come with a gamified learning experience.

References:

Deterding, S., Björk, S. Nacke, L.E., Dixon, D. & Lawley, E. (2013) Designing

Gamification: Creating Gameful and Playful Experiences. CHI 2013 Extended Abstracts, April 27–May 2, 2013, Paris, France.

Domínguez, A., Saenz-de-Navarrete, J., de-Marcos, L., Fernández-Sanz, L., Pagés, C. & Martínez-Herráiz, J.J. (2013) Gamifying learning experiences: Practical implications and outcomes. *Computers & Education*, 63: 380-92.

Morris, B.J., Croker, S., Zimmerman, C., Gill, D. & Romig, C. (2013) Gaming science: the “Gamification” of scientific thinking. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4: Article 607.

Stott, A. & Neustaedter, C. (2013) Analysis of Gamification in Education. Technical Report 2013-0422-01, Connections Lab, Simon Fraser University, Surrey, BC, Canada, April, 8 pgs. Accessed 13 April <http://carmster.com/clab/uploads/Main/Stott-Gamification.pdf>.

Zicherman, G. & Linder, J. (2010) Game-based marketing: inspire customer loyalty through rewards, challenges and contests. Hoboken: John Wiley.