

Using Digitalized Gamification to Enhance Learning Experience Evidence from “Management Accounting for Marketing”

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Gamification is a hot topic across disciplines. It refers to a process that enhances the service with affordances for gameful experiences that supports user’s overall value creation. In the educational setting this refers to an educational approach that aims to facilitate learning and encourage motivation through the use of game elements, mechanics and game-based thinking in both online and offline learning environments and learning processes.

Within educational context the goal of gamification is to engage students to the learning process and in that way enhance the learning experience and learning outcomes. Earlier research has pinpointed numerous advantages of gamified learning. For example students find intrinsic motivation thorough gamification, they are given an ownership of their learning, creative and critical problem-solving is enhanced and learning becomes enjoyable and fun. Also, it is suggested that gamified learning is especially motivating for male students. Typical elements used in gamification of learning include storytelling or narratives, point systems, progress bars, badges and prizes. While gamified learning may exists both online and offline, the contemporary technological development offers more and more tools and applications for online environments. If compared to Bloom’s taxonomy of learning, many of the gamification tools tend to foster learning of lower level categories such as remembering, understanding and applying. However, the higher marketing education needs to reach the levels of analyzing, evaluating and creating as well. Thus, there are challenges of using gamification tools in a way that they support the learning objectives and processes in all levels. This paper aims to promote discussion on gamification tools used in higher marketing education, best practices as well as on future research directions.

The case course under review is a bachelor level marketing course called Management Accounting for Marketing. It was designed in 2011 based on curriculum evaluation and feedback form the business life. Money and numbers are the language of business and the marketers need to speak that language. They need to propose and motivate their ideas to engineers, business controllers, and top management. Thus the students need to learn to motivate their decisions in terms of money, not only with image factors or top-of-mind figures.

However, during a curriculum development project it was noticed that many of the marketing students were afraid of numbers. Through discussions with students it became apparent that the teaching method needs to build their confidence in using management accounting tools, such as budgeting. Also, in order to add variety of teaching methods into curriculum, the course was designed to be an online course right from the beginning.

Structure of the course: The online course focuses on three topic areas: 1) budgeting, 2) pricing and 3) profitability. Each topic area includes two video lectures to cover the background knowledge and practical management accounting tools of that area. Students have online discussion on each topic as well as individual assignments to be concluded. These assignments

are cases that develop not only accounting skills but also more abstract business decision making. In each case, the students need to both solve a marketing challenge and also provide calculations for that. Finally, students take a quiz for each topic area to complete it. Gamification elements in the course include collecting points, resolving “mysteries” and completing quizzes.

Learning points – opportunities and challenges: Throughout the years the course has received very good feedback. The students have appreciated the hands-on cases where they need to think themselves and motivate their answer with numbers. Many of them have explained that the calculations that they do, give them specific tools to use also at the workplace (e.g. self-made excel-sheet templates with formulas.)

One of the challenges is the balancing between gamified elements and content learning. In the best case these are tied together. Sometimes the motivation focuses on fun. The teacher needs to make sure that the gamified elements support the content learning.

In gamified online learning environments timing is important. Just as in online games, the students tend to expect the scores and results to be available immediately. Automated grading can be used in quizzes, but when the task is to solve a mystery (such as preparing the best suitable campaign budget), the grading may take more time. The author has found challenging to balance between quick grading and more sophisticated problem-solving activities.

Small assignments such as group discussions work well as the students work systematically throughout the course. Some students find the workload hard, some like it and explain how it helps them to understand as they need to reflect on each discussion question.

In this course the students are notified in the beginning, how many points are required for each grade. While most of the students tend to use this information in order to higher their grade, some students become more strategic in their learning and complete only that much that they receive the grade they want. Even though this sometimes feels frustrating to the teacher, it pinpoints how the students take responsibility of their own learning and define their goal themselves.

The development of the gamification elements is an ongoing process as the applications and tools for gamification are developed all the time. It requires quite a bit of effort from the teachers to follow this development and find ways to include gamification elements in their course curriculums.

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