BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Gamification mindset*

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Gamification mindset

Ole Goethe

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With the advancement and ubiquity of technology, youth are playing video games more than ever before. Due to their exciting and addicting elements that keep the youth engaged, video games oftentimes offer the perfect balance between boredom and anxiety, nurturing an environment where the youth enters the flow mindset (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Gamification seeks to take engaging elements of video games and apply them to a non-game setting, such as education, to improve learning engagement, which has a positive impact on student achievement, graduation rates, post-secondary education, and employment (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Goethe's (2019) book seeks to contribute to this area by connecting elements of games to learning experiences as a system, which can be achieved by incorporating elements of timing, competition, aesthetics, immersion, and multimodality. Although the book is structured into 12 chapters with no explicitly stated parts or sections, all the chapters can be grouped into the following three overarching themes: overall fundamental gamification mindset (Chapters 1–3), learning systems in the context of gamification (Chapters 4–6), and gamification design within a learning system (Chapters 7–12).

In Chapters 1–3, readers are introduced to the general concept of gamification. The author accomplishes this by first defining and describing this broad and relatively new concept and then outlining the need for and potential of gamification. With the increase in adoption and advancement in technology, including the gaming industry, there is an opportunity for technology to be a valuable tool for gamification development and implementation. Furthermore, technology is becoming a bigger and more integral part of our lives, especially for the youth. Particularly for millennials, there is a shift toward fulfillment, happiness, ownership, and empowerment with their work grounded on intrinsic motivation, as opposed to extrinsic motivations, such as accomplishments and money. A similar shift in attitudes can be arguably applied to Generation Z, which is the primary demographic of grade school students (Twenge, 2017). Chapter 3 reports on the problems with gamification but fails to address the digital divide, particularly with inequities in access and knowledge (Wei & Hindman, 2011). Furthermore, the author describes using big data to improve gamification outcomes but does not address any of the growing privacy concerns associated with big data (Jain et al., 2016).

Critical misconceptions associated with gamification development, such as shallow gamification, are meticulously addressed in this part of the book. In light of the growing popularity of gamification, Goethe emphasizes the importance of understanding proper implementation and design of gamification. Without

such understanding, educators can misleadingly develop or adapt tools that seem to be gamified. Maintaining that gamification is much more than incorporating points, badges, and leaderboards into a system, the author draws the reader's attention to the elements of gamification that are often overlooked, such as interaction, motivation, and assessment of learning outcomes.

The second group of chapters in the book (i.e., Chapters 4–6) frames gamification in an educational setting as a learning system. Goethe spends these three chapters discussing the benefits and practical application of learning systems. An effective gamified learning system allows students not only to learn content, but also to process complicated topics through interaction, immersion, and feedback. For example, students can learn complicated concepts through a series of small goals with immediate feedback. In addition to promoting engagement and motivation, the author suggests that gamified learning systems can improve memory capacity, computer fluency, problem-solving skills, and skill-building.

Learning systems challenge and reframe the traditional role of the educator. With the use of technology, educators can change the way students learn. Educators can use technology as a tool to promote curiosity, motivation, and learning. Furthermore, technology changes the way students interact with each other. As a result, educators need to reframe the traditional structure of classrooms. Examples of structural changes include furniture, class layout, class sizes, and even the physical structure of the school building. Goethe describes the changing of classroom design as agile classrooms where educators are re-envisioning and adopting the structure of schools as the way students interact with their learning change.

The last group of chapters in the book (i.e., Chapters 7–12) describes the process involved in designing gamification within a learning system. Here the author presents a systemic and practical approach to designing a learning system that entails assessing the needs of the students and identifying appropriate game elements. The strongest aspect of this portion is on assessing the students' needs. Goethe encourages educators to consider many elements of their practice that are often overlooked, while connecting the content of the course with motivation. For instance, within the context of language learning, motivating students through a narrative can be ideal. In addition, the author emphasizes the importance of feedback as an essential tool for initiating and maintaining motivation. Gamification serves as a lens for educators to redesign their instructional practice. The author is effective at reframing the educators' mindset to be reflective of their own practice, while being responsive to the needs of the students.

When discussing the numerous game elements, Goethe focuses on advanced game design techniques and technology. For example, he describes haptic feedback and virtualization as immersion tools and explains how color tone is used as a visual element to support game-like experience and immersion. Even though the descriptions of these advanced features of game elements are intriguing, some of them do not appear to be practical for educators. Because most educators do not possess any expertise in game design, they are more likely to adopt existing advanced tools created by trained game designers. In addition to educating the readers on the game elements, the author could have provided more practical resources and examples of tools that educators would be more inclined to adapt. For example, the author could have discussed Google Education's Virtual and Augmented Reality program where students can augment objects in their classroom or immerse themselves anywhere in the world using a smartphone (Google, 2020). Such examples would have strengthened the transition from theory to practice.

The book offers exactly what the title suggests, framing our mindset for gamification. It makes a case for the potential benefits of gamification, especially in the context of youth and technology, while informing the readers of its drawbacks and criticisms. In addition, the author offers basic principles of designing and implementing gamification, emphasizing its use in classrooms as a learning system. Some of the key design principles include rewards for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, consistent feedback, clear and communicated goals, and varying difficulty and options to find the balance between anxiety and boredom. To finish, Goethe expands into the growing potential of gamification with immersion through storytelling, aesthetics, and various forms of virtual reality.

This book offers a comprehensive overview of gamification by including the foundational knowledge of

gamification and a wide range of design elements for effective implementation. Furthermore, many of the chapters are written for educators to frame their mindset towards planning and designing their instruction. While the book is not necessarily written for educators to design an entire gamification system, it serves as a strong starting point for educators to understand and apply gamification. Particularly with L2 instruction, the integration of technology and the motivational aspects of gamification can serve as a new and powerful tool to empower and engage students in language learning (Flores, 2015). I recommend this book to L2 educators as a new challenge to rethink and reframe instructional design.

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