

GAMIFICATION AND (THE QUEST FOR) GLOBAL EMPLOYABILITY



Think twice before you give the evil eye to students on their smartphones in class – they might actually be learning, write **Nannette Ripmeester** and **Veronika Norvaisaite**.



1

Technology is a vehicle, not a goal

Most aspects of our lives are increasingly 'wired up' and education is no exception: course registration, assignments and a large part of communication happens online. But just because our fresh-faced students are checking their messages on iWatch, doesn't mean everything in education should be computerised. To give a very frustrating example: here in the Netherlands, we consider ourselves pretty progressive. Even paying in cash is considered archaic. Whether it's taking a tram, getting food in the canteen or using the copy machine, there's a card for everything! Although we must move forward with technology, we shouldn't over-complicate things or forget that not everyone has ready access to it. For career advice in education, that means introducing automation if and where applicable.

Employability is the buzz word du jour in international education. Gamification isn't far behind. Here we share our top 10 tips for how gamification – that is, the use of game elements in non-game environments – can enhance the employability of your students in the global workplace.

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Speak the language of your students

Successful communication with students means speaking their language. CourseSmart and Wakefield research¹ has shown a staggering 73 per cent of undergraduates wouldn't be able to study without technology – a finding confirmed by all those students glued to their smart phones. Chances are, they're not writing emails or revising lecture notes, they're 'apping' instead. Younger generations tend to have a very short attention span due to the vast overflow of information. That's why being online is not enough – digital careers advice has to be engaging. When talking about employability², there's a big difference between how it's perceived by soon-to-be graduates and alumni who are already in the labour market. Knowing the demographics of your audience will help you reach and assist them better.

¹ www.wakefieldresearch.com

² www.labourmobility.com/student-employability-necessity-choice

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Gamification for the sake of it?

Just like computerising everything because it's hip (the movie *Transformers* springs to mind), gamification shouldn't be introduced simply because it's the next big thing. First and foremost, determine whether it fits the style of your organisation and your target audience. Then work out your objectives. For example, if you want to enhance your students' soft skills, find out whether gamification is the best means of doing so. Clear goals will help you identify the activity you want to drive – whether it's informing, teaching, testing or practicing existing knowledge in a safe environment.

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Games are fun!

One of the best things about gamification is that it's great fun. Why else would we spend three billion hours a week playing computer games?! FarmVille alone attracts 28 million users every day³. Online games have the obvious advantage of visual appeal, players can see the immediate effects of their actions, get bonuses for their achievements and, in some cases, even challenge each other.

It's much easier for students to absorb information if they like what they're doing. The same logic can be applied to career advice. For example, CareerProfessor.works teaches users about cultural sensitivity, job-hunting and doing business by presenting them with different country scenarios and rewarding them with culture tips for making the correct choices. The fun factor is also a strong selling point when introducing your students to a new platform. You have to make sure it's enjoyable! Ask yourself if it's challenging, understandable and enables users to progress. It should also be easy on the eye and free of technical glitches.

³ Gamification.org, 'Moving Learning Games Forward' by MIT Education Arcade, www.knewton.com/gamification-education

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Games are also for serious learning

This may come as a surprise, but students don't need information: they are more than able to look up anything they need on the internet. What they do need is to grasp the essence of the subject at hand. Confucius had it right when he said, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

Gamification in careers and employment should be built on this very principle. Students should be able to read what's required of them in the labour market, assess the knowledge and practise it. And we're not just talking about writing a winning CV. Too often the importance of soft skills is overlooked in education. Although it might be crucial for students to master their subject disciplines (hard skills), not knowing job interview etiquette for a particular country⁴ or how to communicate ideas efficiently (soft skills) may cost them a job. Gamification offers a perfect platform for introducing this knowledge and engaging students with the material.

⁴ www.labourmobility.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Nannette-Ripmeester-Article-IEEE.pdf

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Are games for real?

Well, yes and no. Interactive games give users the experience of real life situations. Remember fire drills and flight simulations? Although taking place in different settings, both fabricated scenarios teach participants how to act and react to circumstances in reality. The same can be observed in the Harvard Business School's strategic innovation game 'Back Bay'⁵ where students have to make investment decisions based on the information they gather. This is useful experience if you want to work on the stock market. In the game, however, players can get fired multiple times. Although this isn't the same as working in a real company, it gives users a much-needed chance to practice.

⁵ www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=37262

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Dealing with the 'F' word

Failure. It's not easy to muster the energy to re-sit an exam and it certainly doesn't get any easier to give 100 per cent for yet another job interview. Gamification normalises the painful notion of failure and turns it into a possibility to improve. Dying, getting fired, picking the wrong option and levelling down doesn't put people off from playing again – it motivates them to push their limits and get better. Although gamification in career advice is designed to prepare students and minimise their chances of failure, students who learn from their mistakes will be better able to deal with the ups and downs of working life.

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Game on!

Careers and employment advisers often ask, 'But how do you know the students will want to play?' If gamification is implemented correctly, this should be the least of your worries. A study conducted on a maths game showed that students solved a greater number of problems, and with a higher level of difficulty, than they would have without the gaming element⁶. And all of this voluntarily. Moreover, people tend to seek career advice when they experience difficulty or when they want to avoid rookie mistakes. Wrapped up as a game, career support becomes more attractive and easier to grasp. It's also easier to disseminate to a larger group, including those who claim they don't need it.

⁶ Lee J., Luchini, K., Micheal, B., Norris, C., & Soloway, E. (2004). More than just fun and games: Assessing the value of educational video games in the classroom. Paper presented at the CHI 04 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Vienna, Austria.

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Diverse, global and connected

As career advisers well know, there's no one-size-fits-all approach – especially when students have diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, different professional experience and future aspirations. Catering to them all means customising our advice, but everyone's time and capacity is limited. Human contact can never be replaced, but it can be enhanced with a self-service system available to students 24/7 and shows information based on user's personal input. Interactive gamification ticks all of these boxes.

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Creating and building games

Anyone can play a game, but creating and building one is a completely different story. If you are considering making an in-house career game for your students, you'll need at least three components: content, IT skills and design. Cooperation between the three is not always smooth as each of these components approach game creation from very different angles. We have been through the experience, but it is rewarding to see the end result – particularly when organising a game challenge and seeing the students' appetite to compete with each other. As one student commented afterwards, "this was the perfect way to engage with career tips and getting to know info I deemed not relevant. It made me understand what is required to get hired."

This article is based on an IEAA webinar, 'Gamification and (the Quest for) Global Employability', presented by Nannette Ripmeester in February 2015. Nannette and Veronika work for Expertise in Labour Mobility where they work to find solutions to ease the transition from education to the global world of work. They are part of the team that developed CareerProfessor, works, which is an example of how gamification can be used to enhance the employability of graduates.

10 EXAMPLES OF GAMIFICATION WITH AN EDUCATIONAL LINK

1 CareerProfessor

An app aimed at recent graduates and alumni from education institutions to support their career path and strengthen their connection to their university.
careerprofessor.works

2 Duolingo

A free language learning app.
duolingo.com

3 Ribbon Hero

A Microsoft game to help educate users of Office 2007 and 2010 to use the tools available in the new ribbon interface.
ribbonhero.com

4 ClassDojo

A classroom management game for teachers to encourage certain student behaviour with rewards and provide instant feedback.
classdojo.com

5 GoalBook

Brings student teams together around their individual learning plans.
goalbookapp.com

6 Brainscape

A mobile and web platform using algorithms to create flashcards, whose presentation pattern can change in response to students' confidence on the topic.
brainscape.com

7 World Cleanup Game

A fun incentive to become part of an environment cleaning initiative.
www.letsdoitworld.org/games/cleantheworld/index.html

8 EpicWin

Turns 'To Do' lists into quests and rewards completed tasks with levelling up and experience points.
rexbox.co.uk/epicwin

9 Merchants

Training your negotiation and conflict resolution skills as a merchant in 15th century Venice.
game-learn.com

10 Back Bay Battery

A strategic innovation simulation game by Harvard Business School
www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=37262

BEYOND THE GLASS CEILING



Dawn Hewitt speaks to some inspiring women in international education and captures a few kernels of their wisdom on women and leadership.

Each year on 8 March, the world celebrates International Women's Day. It is a day to acknowledge the advancements in economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. It is also a day of global recognition reflecting on the roles women play in their personal and professional circles and the associated responsibilities therein.

Personally, International Women's Day prompts me to consider how I might contribute to positive advancements within my areas of influence and, in particular, to the discourses of international education.

I have come to realise that making a positive contribution doesn't have to be arduous. Nor does it require a lifetime of experience. Instead, it is often about identifying one's strengths and applying them to areas that may inspire and challenge others. Leadership – and more specifically women in leadership – has proven to be this space for me.

At the Australian International Education Conference in 2014, Dr Davina Potts (Director, Global Engagement at the Australian National University) and I co-chaired a session on 'Navigating Careers in International Education and Mobility: a Discussion for Aspiring Women Leaders'. Based on the overwhelming feedback we received, it was evident there was a need to establish a platform for robust dialogue enabling women to discuss issues around gender equality, career progression and the challenges of balancing work and life.

Across the international education sector, there are many inspiring women who exemplify positive role models in leadership. In an attempt to capture a few kernels of their wisdom, I devised a set of five standard questions to explore their influences, drivers and views on the issues affecting women in our industry.

I am thrilled to have the privilege to profile these exceptional women and share their insights. Their responses are frank and candid and I trust that you will find these insights as inspiring and educational as I have.