

# **Making Learning Engaging Through Interactive Games**

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Hello, hope you all got to see the video of the Uno game on growth mindset being played by all of us. We really had a lot of fun playing that game and of course we learned a lot in that process. Here we try to go into the depth of what makes that game really a good game for learning the topic. If you recollect each of the cards in the growth mindset card game had a prompt either in the form of a question or a true or false or a choice something like something to think is it a growth mindset or is it a fixed mindset it is asking the user to think and answer some kind of a prompt along with a question or a statement. Now we need prompts Though we may know the topic, we need specific situation prompts for our minds to go in the direction and think critically. So, this is one beautiful aspect of the game where it nudges us to think critically in the topic being taught.

So, prompts is a very key aspect of the teaching learning process and it is beautifully embedded in this game. The second biggest aspect is ability to think on the spot and reflect and also kind of share in the peer to peer group on real life situations. So you might have seen several instances in the video where statements like, I will never be able to succeed, I will never be able to make friends, etc are deliberately prompted in the cards. The user is asked to classify whether it's a fixed or a growth mindset and also reflect.

During the reflection process, rather than just saying it's a true or false or it's a fixed or a growth mindset, the participants are also encouraged to think about their real life situations where they can correlate to it and how they can actually apply the learnings to change their mindset from fixed to growth mindset. This often is missing in classrooms and standard lecture based learnings. Sometimes, unless of course the facilitator takes that extra time and energy to really design the class so that this learning is felt. Of course, there are wonderful facilitators who do that, but this game makes their lives easier. Whether it is an experienced facilitator or if it is a new teacher, making that peer-to-peer learning happen just by employing this card game makes their lives infinitely easier.

So, this is I would say a very good toolkit for reflecting and sharing in a group. Of course,

games is all about fun, and we had several mechanics of fun. But let's take just this one mechanic, which I thought it seemingly like a fun mechanic, but in one sense, it offers ways for prolonging the game. If you notice closely, an UNO game, the real fun part is who's going to finish first, drop all their cards and declare UNO and they are the winner. And that's what even in this game people were trying to do.

But there were fun mechanic cards like rotate right, rotate left, etc., which bring in that on the spot flavor. The surprise element, a person who is going to win may suddenly get more cards when the rotate left or right is applied and vice versa. Person who has accumulated lot of cards just has to hand over and he or she suddenly gets less number of cards. So, those fun mechanics remain, but this take three is also a fun mechanic in the sense that a person who might be in the impression that they have discarded a lot of their cards suddenly ends up getting three more cards.

But here, it is also an indirect learning mechanic, the more cards one has the more the person also learns and his or her peers also end up learning because every card as we discussed is a prompt. So, fun embedded with learning, this is a classic example. If the game did not have any fun elements, it will be very serious reflective game which may not be liked by all. So, we need to bundle that right amount of fun with the learning. which makes it really a fulfilling experience for the learners.

Now, this is yet another aspect which is not there in all kind of games. In fact, most games that we design might end up, I would say, the players can master in a few attempts. The first time the game will be new. If it's a well-designed game, they end up playing more and more. And after a point of time, yeah, people know what are the answers, how to navigate and things like that.

So, there will be a level of saturation. This game, I would say, delays that saturation and also retains its newness because of the way it is designed. Now, the same group, if they play the game, the second time or third time, either on the same day or a few days later, for the same cards they could answer different, for the same questions they could give different answers. That's because of the nature of the game. For example, what is your most difficult situation you have encountered? The answer for that today will vary from a few weeks from now or a few months from now.

And because it's all, the topic is designed in such a way that it's growth mindset and therefore there are no standard answers. And of course, if we play the same game with different players, the answers are going to be different and that richness of learning from a different peer group automatically also comes in. This could be true even in a in a standard subject game like English or Maths or Science, but it is a lot more pronounced in a topic

like social-emotional learning because every day there is new learning for all of us and those learnings and reflections can be brought forth. So, given the topic being taught, this is a very powerful way of bringing it out and retaining the newness. As I mentioned earlier, the answers are not standardized.

There is no right one single answer. If this game is being played by four to six people, The answers could vary by person, across person and yet still be relevant. Because what is the most challenging thing for a person could vary. But the underlying thing of how to overcome that, there could be broad similarities. So, in that sense, I would call it as an open-ended game, adding variety and richness.

There are no single answer or a single type of answers to master. The experiences being shared adds to its newness. As we have played this game across different age groups, starting from teenagers to adults, one of the biggest takeaways that the learners shared was, we are not alone. The first time, whenever anybody gets into this game, all of us people have feelings that we only have the fixed mindset or the growth mindset or I would say more commonly the fixed mindset, right? And the moment others start sharing their experiences, one finds that the similarity in what others undergo and what one undergoes, there is a big connect that's happening. There is a big resonance that happens.

And therefore, This game gives them the feeling that, hey, as humans, we all have similar thinking patterns. We all have similar challenges to overcome and we all have similar struggles. Now, if this is true, but if it was taught in a theoretical fashion in a classroom without experience sharing, this aspect might not come out so beautifully. Now, even in small classrooms if you have noticed, not every learner is open to sharing, opening up and speaking because as humans we are constantly judging ourselves what will our peers think, what will the facilitator think. Although they may be the most open minded of facilitators and the peer students really may not think much.

It's human psychology because the space is not fail-safe as we call it in the game-based learning. It's not a fail-safe space. But let's say instead of a class of a 20 or a 30 or a 50 and the larger the classes, the more overwhelming it is and lesser participation. Now, these games typically are played between four to six people in smaller groups and therefore that comfort and openness is a lot more. Even players who are not familiar with each other don't mind opening up because of the fact that the peer group is smaller in size.

If it was a class sized, full class sized gameplay, that would have prevented a lot of people from participating. But because this is a four to six member team, people open up a lot more easily and therefore the purpose of communicating the idea that all of us are similar is well met. Now often times we are stuck with problems and challenges, specifically in

the case of the way our minds think. And we don't know what the right questions are to ask and typically we go and ask people whom we are most comfortable with. Sometimes they have the answers, sometimes they may not have the answers but they will definitely give us some kind of a guidance.

Whereas what we need really is to tap into the experience of many others and if we don't know the people, we may be a little hesitant in approaching them. Now here in an unplanned manner, the game design allows sharing of solutions for specific situations. Even if we play with people whom we are not familiar with, we may end up getting answers or ideas or some suggestions to solve our own challenges based on how they have shared their solutions. So this is another beauty that has been expressed by many many players who have played this game. So all of this is happening in a fail-safe, fun-filled environment and we end up discovering answers to a lot more challenges.

To summarize, This game is all about building resilience and building a growth mindset and while it's an important topic, it's not easy to teach in classrooms because it's a lot more experiential in nature. Now one way is to give them students or the players assignments to do some field work, to do some reflections and the teacher can guide one to one. The other approach as we have seen in this game is to make them pair share or peer share I would say and everybody benefits from each other's experience and the entire purpose of experiential learning and sharing gets achieved which is exactly why we want to leverage games. Hope you found this useful.