

Making Learning Engaging Through Interactive Games

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Interdisciplinary

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Hello and welcome, Anu. Thanks for joining this discussion on interactive and game-based learning. Thank you, Kartic, for the invite and for being working on this for so long. Thank you. So you've been kind of practicing this interactive game-based learning for a while and you've been teaching for a longer time.

So just walk us through your journey in terms of what has been changing in classrooms ever since you've gone into teaching? I've been teaching since probably 2010 as a visiting faculty. So that's almost now 14 years. And the first time we probably introduced technology into the classroom as in a virtual classroom using MOOCs course was probably 2013. This was way before COVID and we did try introducing a few MOOCs courses.

It had limited acceptability. I wouldn't say it was a roaring success to begin with. Initially, we used it as a facilitator inside the classroom. But by and large, the biggest challenge which any teacher, I think, be it school or college, that we face is the attention span. And increasingly, we are noticing that it is decreasing.

So as every year we see a new batch, we see that the attention span is decreasing. And we also feel that the students probably have a know-it-all attitude before they enter the class. They come in with this feeling that what is new, what is going to be new in my learning, which I cannot learn from a YouTuber, which I cannot learn from any other out-of-the-class resource. So engaging as a teacher, as a facilitator, as a faculty in the classroom is very, very challenging. And that is where I feel if we are able to take on to technology, not just technology, any kind of an interactive based teaching plan where the students are not in a lecture mode, but they are also participating in the teaching learning process.

Then I think the delivery is a little more effective. A little more satisfactory and I feel there is more impetus for the student to enter the classroom, be it online or offline, either

way. Okay, great. This has been roughly the experience which we have seen in the classrooms transform, but the primary problem remains the same. Right.

Okay. Got it. That's great. And I think you mentioned two key points that I heard from you are attention span. How do we keep the students' attention on? And how do we actively involve them in the learning process in terms of making them interact with the class? So what are the steps? I mean, I know you said you tried out a couple of things in 2013. But beyond that, how has been the journey in the last few years? What other things have you tried and what has been the response? So there are two types of students in the classroom, one who over interact and one who do not interact.

And all our classrooms are large in size in terms of numbers. So two, three areas where we have tried, I mean, I feel there is a relatively a larger percentage of success, which is like 70 to 75% of the time it is successful, is using interactive based games. When we say games, everything need not be a long drawn setup which involves the whole class, but somewhere in between. So typically, my classroom plan involves breaking the class into chunks of 10 or 15 minutes burst. So every 15 minutes, we try and introduce some kind of an interactive module.

It could be a quiz. It could be a crossword. It could be a dictionary. And all these are available online very, very easily for us to download and incorporate it into the material. One or say once a week or twice a week, depending on the subject.

So I teach marketing. So depending on the subject, we also introduce a complete game. So the entire class is a game. So it could be a card based game or it could be a treasure hunt or an online kind of a treasure hunt. It could be a mind sweeper kind of battle strategy games, simulation games that we call.

There are a lot of games which we play over three to four weeks or sometimes even six weeks, which are the standard simulation packages which we use in these schools. So the range in which we play the games are pretty high. But not all classrooms are accepting of simulation games. Not all colleges provide us that kind of an infrastructure also. So there are places where we use a simple card game.

It could be, for example, in brand management, I have used what we have once created, I think the Uno based or the poker-based card games. So we you and these are fairly easier and we find that the students who do not interact also start to work and we have a lot of other soft skills like team working negotiation skills also being rendered around the subject . So it has a dual play i see using games in the classroom apart from games we also use case studies. we also use role plays. we also use a bit of theater we use movies

also but we have taken on in a larger way into games and we do keep an eye on what are the games which the youngsters are these days playing and try and simulate something closer to that also.

Okay, very interesting and nice to know. And you've tried adopting a wide spectrum of options, not just in the games world, but even beyond, like when you mentioned theater, role play, definitely all of these add to the flavor and add to the interactivity and make sure make and kind of resonates with the students, right? I mean, it feels more human in the classroom because outside of our classwork or official work, we all like to watch movies, we all like to be with people, interact and somewhat in that sense, we are trying to get that into our classrooms and possibly that's why they feel more at home. And a couple of points that you mentioned, one is you try to break the class into smaller chunks and you mentioned that students who generally don't speak up also open up. Is it that we are creating safer spaces with smaller groups of students which is possibly lacking in a one-to-many interaction if you were to interact as a teacher? Yes, so when we find out why students don't interact, most of the time it's the fear of being judged by others. So when we open up on the online space, especially on a Mentimeter or on a quizzes poll or on even as simple as a chat window, they tend to respond more because the fear of judgment is removed.

So what I don't hear from them in a normal class, I'm able to hear from them in an anonymous way. So I don't need to know who is saying what, but sometimes these online walls which we create where they post their views, etc., for us to read, they're quite insightful. And most of the time, these quieter students are the ones who actually bring in a lot of creative thinking. And the highly interactive students, when they see these kind of posts, when they see these kind of reviews, they also calm down a bit.

So it has, again, a two-way effect. So I feel we should allow, instead of branding students as being quiet in the class or not participating, we should provide them avenues. Which is what these tech tools and probably games do in bringing them out in a comfort zone, in a safe space, as you call it. And it helps to balance the classroom environment overall. Okay, very good observations.

I mean, in fact, making everybody's voice heard or at least most of the class voice heard is the most powerful thing that a teacher can facilitate. And glad to see that you're able to bring those out, even the quieter ones by creating those safe spaces. And as you mentioned that they have really good ideas to share with the class because the spaces become safer. And the more interactive ones also now are calmer and probably give more mature views or at least try to think multiple times before posting possibly.

Yes. Okay, great. And one of the things that happens, I mean, while this idea of game-based learning, interactive learning has been, we have been hearing about this more and more. What do you sense from your sense of co-faculty, not just in your college, but in the larger sense of faculty that you hear around? As to why is it not being adopted more broadly and is it because these things take time, are the teachers and faculty burdened with other administrative activities or do they sense, what do you think are the other factors, in your opinion? I think the biggest factor is tying in to the course content. Not everybody is able to tie it. Most of these games, it is not so much about playing the game as much as it's about the debrief. When you do the debrief is when the game gets connected to the conceptual points.

People say it's very easy to do it in marketing, it's easier to do it in arts and liberal arts kind of subjects. No, I've seen this being used even in subjects like mathematics and physics and very core papers of science also. The crux of using alternate interactive methodology lies in the debrief. And for that, you need a whole lot of lesson planning to integrate the debrief, the learning points back into the conceptual.

So it has to circle back. So most of the times when we do take it to the junior most faculty, they say we play the games, but it is more like fun. Then I have to come back and do the course content so that they're able to sit for the exam. So that connect is what is missing, that I play the game, but they either come with a pre-read to the class. So they're able to understand that the game is connected to the pre-read. And then the faculty or the facilitator has to provide the debrief.

This is one key point which I feel is missing. The second key point which probably demotivates faculty is they don't know how to assess. And this does not become an assessment component. So they want them to write something.

So it dilutes the activity. When you ask them to submit it as an assignment, then the whole activity is lost. So they don't know how to assess the students out of a game-based activity. Typically, my argument would be everything need not be assessed. Everything need not be quantified into marks. So you can use this probably initially in places where you want to teach a conceptual point a little bit more strongly.

I think that works a lot. It also works at points where you feel that the attention span is falling. Game-based assessment tools are available. So the things like with this and all , short quizzes or you can use it for assessment also but the crux would be in teaching faculty as to how to plan a game around a conceptual point. The game should not be hanging loose It is not an interactive tool just to make the class a little bit more fun.

It's not just that. You're using the fun element to enforce a point. And that requires a little bit of planning, which obviously takes a lot of time outside of class hours. And yes, teachers are burdened with admin work. And therefore, this becomes a huge challenge.

Okay, okay. Yeah, thanks for elaborating on that. But do you think in your experience, but despite that you chose to go with it and few others choose to go with it, is it because you are able to see the results, you are able to see a better connect with the students. Because there's nothing more joyful for a teacher than actually the students taking a liking to the course or the classroom and the interactivity brings out all that rather than.

.. Yes. So is that what it is? And you would say it's a one time investment. As an individual, how different do you want your class to be? Because as the teacher, as a professional, you are not given extra marks for doing this. Your performance rating or appraisal doesn't go up by any larger measures. It does require some amount of extra time that you're going to invest in planning out and setting up the game in the classroom. Again, you're not going to be paid or compensated for that.

It's not going to reduce any other piece of work. So ultimately, it is only for the joy or the satisfaction of teaching, which I feel doesn't click with a lot of people. It clicks with very few people. Okay, okay. But teaching does, in your experience, has become more effective by using these? Yes, definitely it has become more effective.

In terms of, I wouldn't say it does not translate immediately into theory-based marks. But I have a lot of students who come back, say, after even 10 years and actually say that, yes, what we learned that day, we are using in our workplace. Or, you know, I still remember it. I still recall it.

Or it's changed my perspective on this subject. So I think at a broader level, it transforms the student, not from only a marks perspective. Marks, yes, it will, but not immediately.

Yeah. Got it. Yeah. So that actually is a great source of joy for the teacher in the sense that if any of the concepts that we facilitate in a classroom and the way we deliver it is remembered by the students many years later and the way the class was. So it's always a joy to hear back such feedback from the students. Because more than the subject, it's about the connect. It's about the takeaways and how the class was.

They enjoyed the journey. They enjoyed the learnings. So marks are secondary. I would say marks probably follow that once you develop a love for the learning, with a little bit of discipline and effort marks will follow. It is better than just studying for the sake of marks in which case you may end up getting it but you may not have the real love for

learning. So we need to have both go hand in hand but more importantly.

For example, In a paper, I'm sorry to interrupt, but in a paper like statistics or operations research, which we have taught, there was a class which was finding it problematic to choose the right methodology in problem solving. So, you know, you get stuck in the third step. You don't know how to proceed. So for that, there was a game. It was a simulation game, which was available, I think, from Brown's University.

And we used that in class and it actually helped in the examination also because exactly at that point where they get stuck between which statistical tool to use, they're able to recall the game and they are able to find out which one to put in place also. So that really helped. In that way, yes, it did help in the marks also. That's fantastic. You've given an example where it has had a direct correlation.

So, I mean, the game that you mentioned for statistics. So, great. Great to know that. And I think as we go along, if there are teachers who want to get started with this interactive mode of teaching and game-based teaching, what would be your probably top two, three pieces of advices and things to watch out and are there any guidances that you would like to offer to them? I think they should just start small. First, try and learn how to set up an activity, how to debrief and it could just be a very very small bit like using a crossword puzzle or using some kind of a very small simulated animated game and start small do not link it to any assessment immediately The moment you see that it is more receptive, it will automatically fall in place. Second thing is it's always better to work with a lesson plan.

And although I know a lot of teachers find it constrained, they say that I go into the class and the class flows naturally. Yes, it does flow naturally, but it is better to have a lesson plan as to what is the objective for this class going to be. And then try and see if the game fits in. Do not fit the game and then try and work on the objective.

The objective of the class has to be very, very clear. And then probably the game is only an add-on tool. A lesson plan, a classroom plan is a must. It's compulsory before any teacher enters the classroom.

Yes. Okay, that's a very good message. So, focus on the lesson plan, focus on the objective of learning and then try and integrate the game, try and pick relevant games to it and start small. So, don't get, I mean, with the least investment of time, whatever is realistically possible for the teacher, it could even be five minutes to start with and even one class a week or something like that. But start slow, observe the results, observe the receptivity and then try to progressively improve.

Yeah, yeah, that works very well. Okay, great. So that was very, very helpful and thanks for sharing your experiences. Any last words that you would like to have? Would you like to... I, if this is being reached out to a lot of teachers either in schools and colleges, I would definitely suggest taking a game-based approach because not just from a student perspective, from a teacher's perspective also, it adds a lot of creativity to our own profession.

And it makes it more interesting. Every class need not be the same. Every year need not be the same. So do have a look out in the outer world as to what are the things that are moving around and what games are there, what is the technology that is there. And if they are updated, I think our classes also become a lot more interesting. Thank you. Thank you, Kartic, for inviting and sharing this, giving a platform to share this perspective on.

Thank you. Thank you so much for your ideas. And that's a great message. It's a great way to keep in touch with the constantly upgrading world. And the teacher's creativity also improves is the final message that you're saying.

That's really a wonderful message. Thank you so much for your time, Anu. And thank you very much. Thank you, Kartic. Yeah. Bye.