

Making Learning Engaging Through Interactive Games

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Interdisciplinary

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So, welcome Professor Kirupa. Happy to have you here and looking forward to interacting with you on making teaching learning interactive. So, to begin with, could you just share your teaching experience overall and also specifically how long you have been doing this interactive teaching learning through games? Hi Kartic, thanks for having me here today. So I'm into teaching for the last 20 years or so. And about a decade back, I started experimenting with games inside class.

I really started because I was involved in many outbound training programs for students. I found that the energy levels of students inside the class vis-a-vis on the ground was much, much different. And many times the outbound programs themselves had very, very life-changing experiences among students. So I think that happens usually once or twice in a year, or maybe once or twice in a program, and that's all.

So I thought as a facilitator, it was important for me to try to see how I can make such life-changing experiences inside the classroom. And that's where my journey towards game-based teaching learning started. So from that, I've been trying to experiment with small activities, so small games to realize games in classroom. And, you know, I think the journey has been very fulfilling, I should say. Okay, great, great to know.

So outbound training being the trigger, you wanted to carry the same energy levels that they had in outbound training and try and see if we can create such environments in the classroom, right? Not completely. At least I am trying to see whether the energy levels that are so contained inside the classroom, if they are out, it's completely a different scenario. So if they can use that productively for learning or for equipping themselves well, I thought that would be the best way to go about it. Okay, okay. So, could you give us some examples of what all you have tried, where did you start and how you have been, what do you say, experimenting and revising for the better in the context of your subjects? Yeah.

But when I started, I tried to use a very short games like energizers in classroom so that

the students energy levels do not always keep go down, but then they are able to you know, come back to the classroom and I'm delivering the lectures. So, initially I just started only with small, simple energizers in classroom, which itself was good enough for students to come back. Then slowly I started creating games or making small activities, which will actually be helpful for the students. So, what was initially fun and energizer slowly moved to game, which is also subject related. So some small key takeaways that they should have and a small activity will be designed inside the classroom.

And then from there I moved on to creating larger games or I would say the duration of the game itself will be for one, one and a half hours where the entire content of the subjects to be taught will be delivered through the game. So that's how my transition has been. Okay, great to know. Maybe just for the benefit of the audience, if you can share a few energizers that you started with, that you do periodically, how the student response was, and another example of a full-fledged game or an activity that you do in the classroom that helps to teach the lesson better. Just a couple of examples will help the audience understand.

Okay, for an energizer, say for a span of five minutes to eight minutes, I used to do something called as the human tic-tac-toe, which most of them are familiar today. But at those times when we tried to do that in class, it was not so familiar. So that will take about five minutes and then students are energized and then they come back to class. Or they will have to solve a small puzzle, but there will be even different positions and they will be asked to create. For example, five people stand around it, a small soft toy will be given to them and they will have to pass it to every alternate person making it a star.

So these are some small energizers that I used to use. Then slowly from there I moved to in-class activities or small games like for example to teach student resistance to change or change management initiatives in class. So I ask them to clasp their hands like this. There will be two people pairing up and they will be asked to clasp their hands like this. Let us assume person A is having their hands clasped.

Person B does not, is having his hands free. So person B should actually try to remove the hand of person A, should separate the hands, the left and right hand like this of the person A. So they try to do, the harder they try to pull the hands apart, the tighter the hands become. Similarly, they do it vice versa. So the other person takes this role and then they try to do the same thing.

So the more force you put to separate the hands apart, the more force they put it to keep it together. So and then I teach this concept of resistance to change. The more you force them to accept something in the organization, the more likely are they going to resist it.

So higher the force to make them change, higher is also the resistance. So I try to do small activities like this, which will help them understand the concept of, concept that I'm going to teach in class.

Then I created an entire game, probably you must be familiar with our traditional board games called Aad Puli Aatam. So where there are 15 pieces of the goats and there are three pieces of the lions. sorry. So, I try to use these two you know game pieces as actual students in classroom and then I say one of them are the employees or the workers while the three member team or the tiger team is the management team and then try to see how change management can happen in the rest of the class. We give it giving them a lot of insights on when they keep playing there will be different scenarios that will be you know created in the class to make them understand that particular activity.

So essentially, yeah, got it. So I think what we are trying to do is create small metaphorical situations like the resistance to change management, clasp of hands. That's like a metaphor into how people resist change. And this goats and tigers, similar thing, like perceived control by managers and supervision and concepts related to organizational change, you try to bring them out with. Now, I'm sure that your classes will be fun, but I would like to hear from you how the student responses have actually been.

Actually, the students remember the game much more than the activity or the concept in class. So, their reflections on the concept art is primarily coming from the game itself. So I find the learning much more interesting. Students want not to miss classes. They never bunk on a day when I'm going to do some activity.

And I also see increase in the energy levels in my classroom. I also see increased interest to understand what we are trying to deliver every day, which usually is not there in an lecture session. So the energy levels vary, but they're not very keen to know what's going to happen or what's being taught. But when it is going to be a game-based class, then the activity will vary.

Okay. How many, what is your proportion of mixing activity-based classes and games activities versus regular lecturing? Or do you try to integrate a little bit of activity in every of your classes? Yeah, like I can say 20% of my classes will be completely game-based, which means the entire concept will be taught only through games. Another 20% of my classes will have inbuilt small activities inside the classroom. And the remaining 60% of my class will have different pedagogies. There could be case, there could be lecture, there could be presentation, there could be role play. So different other pedagogies will be used, flipped classroom sometimes.

So all that will be there in my other classes. Approximately 20% will be completely delivered through Game based. Okay. Yeah, I would count it as 40 because not every class is possible to.

.. You don't have to completely redesign it into a game. The fact that the additional 20% of the classes, you try to do some activities, they are as interesting compared to a lecture. So that makes it 40% of your classes are activities and games. But even the remaining 60%, you try to go beyond lectures, make the students participate and interact, right? Because our classroom has, the timing for my classroom is one and a half hours. Because it's a MBA, PG program, our timing is one and a half hours.

So to have the attention of the students for one and a half hours is very difficult. If you're just going on a lecture mode, we have to have it interactive. Right. So you try to do these flipped classrooms where you make the students talk. What is the percentage of the students who open up in some form or the other by trying out these interactives vis-a-vis a lecture class? Just to give an indication, just to give an idea of how much boost or how much more audience participation happens in these interactive mechanisms that you employ.

Usually 20 percent of the class is always active very active and there are another 25 who are very rarely active so the remaining 60 percent would be continuity but not for a great extent so i have the mechanism of you know i carry this box to my classes all the time so they will have chits like this students will have chits like this And then, every time they want to share something, they will drop the sheet inside the box. The box keeps rotating. And then, I get a sheet like this from the students, which will indicate their own number. So, which means their class participation is counted. So, after the each class, when they come back, I take account of this and then share this back to the students to tell them how many of them have been active.

And I also make sure that in every class that I teach, the first day, the first session will be to tell them that the psychological safety of the student is at a stake and anything shared inside the classroom will be only within the four walls of the classroom and there is no ridiculing or making fun of the contribution of students and everybody should treat each other equally and everybody should respect each other's opinions, however good or bad or silly they may be. So that's the first psychological contract that they enter into when they start the class. And then after that I see, since I'm also selecting the people who are contributing, generally the response rate in the class is very good. So by using a combination of mechanisms, the points that you highlighted are very important. You are trying to create a comfort factor, the psychological comfort and an assurance that every

contribution is valid.

Secondly, for the people who are probably a little shy of speaking up, You're trying to create this anonymous chit mechanism. Of course, there are digital tools available, but you're using a very simple tool or a mechanism that can be deployed in any classroom. You don't have to be technology dependent. And the fact that you get to hear their voices also. So giving voice in a safe zone to every student or a learner is essential.

And that is what you're trying to do in various different forms. If I'm not mistaken, already you're creating a comfort factor by deploying games and activities in about 40% of your classes, which is very significant. Even in the remaining classes, you are trying to create these mechanisms by case discussions, flipped classrooms, anonymous chits, so that there are lot more opportunities for students to open up. I'm sure, if I'm not mistaken, about 80% of the class now, 80 to 90% of the class will participate in some form or the other.

Am I right? Yes. Across the different mechanisms. See, because the number of mechanisms are more, okay, that is great. So, what is the class size that you approximately have? It is 45.

45. Okay. That's a reasonably mid-sized class, but it's still essential to get the voices because the larger the class sizes are, it becomes more difficult, both for the teacher as well as for the student. But even here by deploying these mechanisms, you're able to see a significantly higher interactivity. Right? Okay. Do you do this for all? We also have this mechanism that in every classroom, in every desk, there will be students' names given there. So, they will be seated with a placard with their name there.

And most of the students in our class, if we are able to remember their names itself, they have a tendency to want to share or talk to us. Instead of telling, can you share or can you share your thoughts or can I have your work, what your opinions are, if I use the student's first name and talk to him, there are highly likely chances that he feels comfortable because I know him. Because I know him. My biggest class itself is only 45, Kartik, not bigger than that.

Or it's even lesser, or it's even lesser. When we go for elective classes, it's even lesser. Even lesser. That's okay. I think irrespective of the class size, the fundamental principles are similar. Only thing is in a larger class, there could be more challenges, but the fundamental principles of making the student comfortable, I mean you give another mechanism by name calling, by keeping those placards, just so that that personal rapport gets built, that comfort factor gets filled.

and the other mechanisms that you shared, right, by trying to actively involve them. Now, do you, I am assuming that you do this for all courses that you teach as much as possible, right? Yeah, most of the courses except for one or two courses where I look at second years elective courses and when I do people analytics, courses on analytics, I do not get a chance to use games. Okay. But otherwise, I would say 60% of my courses that I teach will definitely have this element incorporated.

Okay, great. Now, there is a concern among some of the educators that designing these activities or modifying their classrooms, even if they want to adopt this pedagogy of activity and game-based, could consume time. And secondly, there may be problems in completing the syllabus, etc., What has been your experience and how much extra time does a teacher, assume that they are a new teacher, they are not familiar with this, would they have to invest? I mean, what is your perspective on that? It definitely is a concern because they might fall short of hours to teach and deliver. Second, we should also look at the level at which they are teaching. Are they teaching undergraduate? Are they teaching postgraduate? So when I say post-graduates, I think students are not always dependent on classes for study.

I'm sure even if they don't come to class or even if they miss classes, they are still able to cope up and learn by themselves. So when they come to class, I think we are even more, we should even more feel responsible to give them the best learning environments and not be stuck by syllabus or course completion or hours and I think we should not go by that. So, I face some challenges like this but I try, what I try to do is I try to give certain topics which are very simple, easy to understand as self-study for the students themselves. So, which means I save some hours there. Certain topics which are very important that students should know from this course.

It's not appropriate for the student to leave the class without knowing these concepts. Those concepts, I try to insist and take a deep dive and then teach them thoroughly well. Probably those concepts are where I will try to use the games also. So, I can spend some more hours on that.

There are also certain topics which are good to know. I mean, they are nice to know. Students should know. Okay, fine. But you don't have to be definitely be thorough in those concepts. So, those concepts I try to pool it together, probably save some time that, you know, combine a couple of topics together and deliver on a day, do some extra classes, ask students to come for some evening sessions.

So I try to do that and then incorporate that into my course. But mostly I don't go for

extra classes. Mostly I don't go. I will be able to fit into the given scheduled hours itself. But only thing is I try to do a pre-planning and then manage the sessions according to. After giving way for my game-based sessions, I allocate the other sessions and try to complete.

Okay. Is this a fair summary? I mean, what you're trying to do is not every, and it's making perfect sense. Not every topic is equally important. The easy ones, you let them learn on their own. And certain topics that can be pulled up, I mean, the attention need not be given for every topic in every class.

So you try to combine opportunities. The really important ones, you take that extra time to actually build games or probably do activities so that they are actively involved. And it is not only about the games, it's about the discussions that happen in and around the game, right, post the activity completion. That interactivity causes the concepts and theory around that to sink in better, right? So you invest extra time and you feel that that is really needed because essentially if they were probably delivered as just lectures, the concept wouldn't actually sink in as much. A role play or activity will help them remember that a lot better. And even if they associate that concept with this role play that they did in class, it's far more effective, right? So somewhere we have to balance between course completion and the effectiveness of learning, right? And that's what you're trying to do, if I am not mistaken.

Absolutely Okay great and how do you find this evolving in your circle of faculty not necessarily in your college or institution but in around you uh in your network over the last couple of years. In the last couple of years, you asked me how much have people changed to such pedagogy. Yes, yes, yes, yes. See, I think every institution insists on going for new and innovative pedagogy in teaching. When it comes to accreditations also, there is a serious impetus on using such pedagogies.

They even ask whether our pedagogy has been shared with other institutions and other stakeholders. So, every institution is on it. But how far are faculty really taking the time, efforts to do that? I think like 40% of them would try to do it. The remaining 60, I don't think take the extra mile or go the extra bit to try to do it. Which I also think is very natural because given a normal distribution, I think Not all of us will be able to do all things with ease.

Some of us are very naturally inclined to such things. Some of us are really not. And I'm sure each teacher has their own, you know, what do I say, their own, you know, best strengths for them to deliver. So, I think each of us play a different game there. And for students also, it's essential that all of us cannot be doing the same things.

So, each of us have our own strengths. And we should play with our strengths. Great, great. That's a good way to put it. But for an educator who wants to get started, if not necessarily the full-fledged games and activities, but even with the energizers that you talk about, that might be actually something that every educator who, even if they are oriented towards lecture-based learning, might be interested in, without necessarily having to cut into the class time.

Is that a fair statement? Yes, absolutely. So what would be your suggestions and tips for them to adapt them because they are not going to really take away the class time in a significant way. Maybe as low as three minutes or five minutes out of the class period. I mean in your case it's one and a half hours but different instructors have different times anywhere between 45 minutes, one hour, one and a half hours etc. So what would be your suggestions and give some ideas and inspirations for those? My first suggestion would be they are trying to deal with an audience which was never before like this, which means their attention span is low, their expectations from class are minimal, their distractions are the highest and they have a lot of things from where they can learn on their own. So when you're trying to address this type of an audience, unless you are two levels up, we will not be able to do justice for the job that we are here.

So I think they will have to definitely, experimentation should be the order of the day for them. So they cannot stick to just lecture or they cannot just stick to the chalk and talk methodology. They have to keep trying to improvise the deliverables every semester. At least one or two new things they should try and experiment and see which works, which does not work. And when they do this for at least three years, I'm sure they will hit upon something which will actually be very close to their heart and also will be very, very interesting for the students from the learning perspective.

At the end of the day, my question is always about not what I taught, but what was learned. So as long as we are delivering that, I think our jobs are not yet over. So they should try to look for opportunities where the students will be able to learn easily, quickly, in more interesting ways and in a very safe environment. So this is these four things I think they should definitely try to look for in every class that they will.

And try to use as many tools as possible. Okay, great. So, quickly, easily, interesting and in a safe environment, right? So, where they are not judged and where they are at comfort and ease, essentially. Okay. So, thank you.

Thank you for sharing your perspective. It was great having you here. Wonderful. I am sure educators will benefit a lot by watching this. Thank you so much. Thank you so

much, Karthik. Nice talking to you after some time. And also thanks for the opportunity for taking of me and then having me here with you today. Thank you. Thank you very much. Pleasure was mine. Yeah. Bye.