



GAMIFICATION IN ENGLISH ONLINE LEARNING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to document the English Online Learning Experiences using Gamification among college students in one of the colleges in the province of Surigao del Sur, Philippines. Specifically, the study sought to find out the following: (1) experiences of instructors and students in using gamification during online learning; (2) instructors and students' view on gamification; and (3) ways on how gamification in online learning be improved. This involved eight (8) college students and four (4) English Instructors, who underwent an inclusion criterion, participated in the in-depth interview and focus group discussion. A phenomenology research design was used in this study as this sought to get the lived experiences of both participants. To gather the data, researcher-made interview guide questions validated by experts were used to gather data. Results of the study revealed that both instructors and students find gamification an aid to their learning; however, difficulties in integrating it emerged due to many reasons identified - one of which is internet connection as a major factor. Thus, the study recommends that in blended learning, course instructors are encouraged to review and revisit their course syllabus, adding the integration of gamification in their online classes; the Dean for Academics to guide and support the crafting of a general online learning plan; institution's extension services may include wireless internet connection points in adopted barangays to be utilized by the student-residents there; and NEMSU-Lianga alumni are encouraged to form social groups or programs in raising funds for the less-privileged students who have zero access to technology.

Keywords: *Gamification, Distant Learning, English Online Learning, Phenomenology, Higher education*

INTRODUCTION

Health emergencies such as the pandemic has had a significant impact on the education sector and provided a much-needed impetus for digitization. It has transformed the education system drastically and has brought a paradigm shift in teaching and learning methodologies forcing educational institutions across the globe to re-imagine traditional classroom learning and transition to an online mode of teaching to provide uninterrupted access to education and knowledge (Bhati, 2016).

As such, technologies are the visible face of the immediate changes taking place in the new normal (Koopman, 2019). Moving from face-to-face presence to virtual contact (synchronous and asynchronous), the learning space becomes disembodied, virtual not actual, impacting both student learning and the organization of schools, which are no longer buildings but websites (Pacheco, 2020). With this, both instructors and students have to keep pace with the new trends of delivering instruction by making everything possible online.

With the online modality, motivation and engagement are an ongoing challenge for classroom instructors and the basis of various research endeavors (Glynn et al., 2015). A substantial body of literature indicates that the use of non-traditional interventions, such as games, simulations, multimedia instruction and interactive activities are valuable teaching methods. Hence, the rapid increase in the availability and affordability of interactive technologies has contributed to the adoption of games in higher education teaching to foster collaborative learning, exploration and discovery (George, 2018). In Malaysia, for example, where the teaching and learning of English have changed from conventional chalk-and-talk methods to modern methods that involve various platforms such as *Quizizz and Kahoot!*, which is free and easy to use.

With the adoption of games, it has been seen that students are eager to experiment with different technologies to support their learning, largely because they are skilled in the use of mobile technology and enjoy using applications and games designed for such devices (Prensky, 2011). In the Philippines, Carbonilla-Gorra et al (2016) concluded in his study that most students in state colleges and universities in Caraga region are likely to use technology in the classroom for the purpose of positive consequences supporting the view that use of technology helps in enhancing learning related activities in the classroom. Moreover, according to Barrio, et al (2016), educational games and game-based response systems (GSRs) or the gamification techniques integrated into student response systems, both increase student motivation and engagement (Graham, 2015).

Northeastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU)-Liangá, has its fair share of challenges when it comes to students' motivation and engagement in remote teaching and learning. As it has been viewed as one of the challenges in the paradigm shift to the

virtual world, instructors of the institution tried to venture on the applications available in the internet to augment the dilemma, one of which is by the integration of lessons through gamification, which are the interactive student engagement platforms which offer multiple features in making one's classroom fun (Shamil, 2021). The positive feedback gamification is gaining from instructors, such as *quizziz*, *kahoot!* and the like, who have come to integrate it already in their respective classes prompted the researchers to conduct the study. Determining students' lived experiences on these forms of educational games in this time of online teaching will give the institution a research-based basis on embracing digital games as part of the continuity learning plan, to answer the growing problem of students' engagement in remote teaching and learning; thus, this study.

Here are some of the concepts gathered by the researchers that can be associated with gamification, challenges in using it, and its positive and negative impacts in integrating into online classes.

Gamification. Students in the 21st century have a different need than those who came before them. Due to the advancement in technology, combined with the high expectations of academic success, much of their time is spent fulfilling requirements rather than learning (Dichev et al., 2015). The problem of how to motivate students to enjoy learning, in an environment filled with distractions from a variety of technology driven devices is what educators wrestle with every day. Motivation is one aspect of gamification which is often discussed, but there are questions about empirical evidence related to increasing motivation (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017).

Gamification is the creation of game-like feelings, in non-game situations (Wiggins, 2016). The objective of gamification can also be defined as the harnessing of game mechanics to inspire similar senses and engagement to that of games (Chia & Hung, 2017). As a society, the use of games for entertainment has become commonplace. The availability of gaming consoles, tablets, cell phones, and computers for playing games have become ubiquitous (Faiella & Ricciardi, 2015). Often, the first thought regarding gamification leads to technology; however, gamification is a method of engaging people in activities as directed (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). The technology of gamification is a tool to facilitate the game environment (Faiella & Ricciardi, 2015). In other words, gamification is a social construct, which motivates those included to participate in a specific way (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Gamification is a method of encouraging the enjoyment of accomplishment. Nick Pelling may have coined the term in 2002, (World, 2015), but the term did not truly trend until 2011 (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Since then, education has embraced gamification as a method of motivating students to study and learn (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017).

Challenges in Using. Given the knowledge base stemming from research concerning motives for participation and gamification, gamification illustrates a promising tool to evoke positive effects among teachers and students around the world and to create a more enjoyable experience for users. The application of gamification is however not easily accomplished and definitely not without obstacles and challenges. Previous endeavors and scientific research have mainly neglected this side and solely proclaimed

its potential benefits and values instead. Yet, gamification can unfold its potential only under such circumstances where obstacles and challenges are addressed adequately.

There are two major sources from which obstacles and challenges can arise. The first challenge concerns the misuse of gamification by developers and decision makers. Gamification is not a standalone solution but describes the application of game design elements in a specific artifact. Developers and decision makers have to be aware that this artifact has to be constructed in such a manner that the use of game design elements contributes to the creation of an enjoyable experience (Füller, 2006; Scheiner, 2015). Hence, given functionalities of the artifact have to be interwoven with the chosen game design elements. Game design elements are otherwise not perceived as an integral part but as disturbing or distracting elements. Game design elements also have to be aligned with the overall objective of gamification to guide the activities of participants toward that objective (Scheiner & Witt, 2013).

The second challenge is closely linked to the previous challenge. If rewards become too important, participants could start to game the system. In cases where self-marketing is a main trigger for participation, participants could especially try to gain an unfair advantage by manipulating the system. A common approach to play a VIC illustrates the formation of cartels. Participants build groups and show a concerted behavior in order to promote their goals and ideas. This is expressed for instance by awarding each other points, by writing positive comments to each other, or by trying to negatively influence the public evaluation of competing ideas. A longitudinal study by Scheiner (2014) indicated for instance that participants in an online idea competition were generally aware of this issue and pointed to its possible and inherent negative consequences for participation. The remaining question is, however, at what point manipulation starts to harm the motivation of participation and when it starts to inhibit the intended objectives of VICs.

Perceived Usefulness. To answer the growing problem especially in students' engagement, made by adjustments to remote learning, research on technology integration and utilization in the English language teaching (ELT) classroom to enhance the teaching of English as second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL) has been popular in recent years because of its pedagogical contributions. Teachers, policy makers, and education scholars believe that technology integration supports both the teachers' pedagogical practices and the students' learning improvement (Costley, 2014; Parvin & Salam, 2015). This technology integration has been narrowed down by Gilakjani (2017), in his study, to educational games (EG) which are found to be as an effective learning tool as stated in various literatures. Garris et al (2015) have found that EGs are able to help students on various learning domains such as cognitive, affective as well as psychomotor skills. Among the EG findings that is widely discussed, is its ability to increase student motivation to learn. One of the most important factors in education is motivation to learn. Therefore, a highly motivating EG should be able to transform learning approaches like never before. A study of Garzotto (2019) also revealed that multiplayer online games provide learning benefits on affective level as well as knowledge domain. Other studies also acknowledged the benefits of using games for learning. According to

these studies, games motivate learning, offer immediate feedback, support skills, and influence changes in behavior and attitudes.

Cautions. Just because something is cool, fun, and popular does not mean it will lead to learning (Kapp, 2013). Be on the lookout for this “wrong” reason when making the decision to gamify something in the classroom. PBL (points, badges, leaderboards) are the most commonly implemented aspect of gamification, though often without justification (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Neither the fun factor, nor the popularity factor (e.g., other teachers are using gamification) should be the driving force behind using a gamified approach for an interactive learning activity.

Deciding to gamify a learning activity on the assumption that everyone loves a game is another “wrong” reason to use gamification (Kapp, 2013). Evaluating the audience that will be participating in the activity is an important step in the design process. Some students love games and competition, but others do not. Instructors should use an approach that will appeal to their specific group of students.

Using gamification with the idea that students will play the game and never know that they are learning is not a good justification for gamifying a learning activity. Research shows that students retain information longer when they know what they are learning (Kapp, 2013). Gamification should highlight the lessons learned. Pre-discussion and post-discussion about concepts learned in the gamified activity are important to consider.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to determine the experiences of instructors and students on the use of gamification in English online learning. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of instructors and students in using gamification during online learning?
2. How do the instructors and students view gamification?
3. With the lived experiences, how can gamification in online learning be improved?

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the qualitative design and methodology, research site, selection criteria and participants, data collection, methods of validation and ethical considerations of the study.

A. Qualitative Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of both instructors and college students in the use of gamification in their online learning. Since this explored the

lived experiences, phenomenological research was used, as it seeks to study a concept or phenomenon experienced by one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009).

Hegel described phenomenology as conscious knowledge associated with saying what is perceived, sensed, and known from the person's experience (Moustakas, 1994). Like Hegel's description of the phenomenology, Lourer (1967) implied that the unique source of absolute existence is based on what the person thinks, feels, and perceives. Moustakas explained the phenomenon as "what appears in the consciousness" (p. 26). Husserl was influenced by Descartes' belief that the "perception of the reality of an object is dependent on a subject" (as stated in Moustakas 1994, p. 27).

B. Research Site

The study was conducted in Northeastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU)-Liangá formerly known as Surigáo del Sur State University-Liangá, located at the heart of the municipality of Liangá, Surigáo del Sur. The institution achieved its status as a university through Republic Act 9998 signed on February 22, 2010. The history of the University dates back to 1982 when Bukidnon State College opened their extension in Tandag known as the Bukidnon External Studies Center. In 1992, it became the Surigaodel Sur Polytechnic College. The creation of the College integrated four DECS-supervised schools in the municipalities of Cagwait, Tagbina, Liangá, and Tago. Six years later in 1998, the College earned the status of being a state college by virtue of Republic Act 8628. In 2000, the Surigáo del Sur Institute of Technology (SSIT) in Cantilan became the fifth satellite campus of the University.

As an institution, it offers nine (9) programs under four (4) colleges. For the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), Bachelor of Science in Environmental Sciences (BSES) and Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology (BSMB); for the College of Teacher Education (CTE), Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BEED) and Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education (BSEd) major in Biological Science; for the College of Fisheries (CFT), Bachelor of Science in Fisheries (BSFi); for the College of Business and Information Technology (CBIT), Bachelor of Computer Science (BSCS), Bachelor of Business Administration (BSBA) majors in Financial Management (FM) and Business Economics (BE) and the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM).

Even before the pandemic, the institution performed excellently both academically and non-academically. With the crisis, the institution continued to perform through a continuity learning plan and pursued providing quality education through a blended learning modality. With this, the institution, through its instructors, provides online classes to students and uses different modes of educational games to augment the challenge on students' engagement; thus, the research site of this study.

Figure 2 illustrates the map of Liangá, Surigáo del Sur, particularly in NEMSU-Liangá where the study was conducted.



C. Selection Criteria and Participants

This study investigated the lived experiences of both instructors and college students in the use of gamification in online learning. This involved the college students of the institution across levels of NEMSU-Lianga and English instructors who are using various forms of gamification in online learning.

This study used purposive sampling design to determine the respondents. The study used the following criteria to be included as respondents, for the students: (1) he/she must be currently enrolled in the institution's blended learning modality; (2) he/she is enrolled for at least two (2) semesters. Meanwhile, for the instructors: (1) he/she must be able to integrate gamification for at least two (2) semesters; and (2) he/she should be an English instructor.

Since there were a lot of students that can be considered as participants, their names were drawn by lots for the identification of final participants. They were informed of their roles in the study, and those who did not like to be part of were considered; thus, there were four (4) English instructors and eight (8) students as participants of the study.

D. Data Collection

The following are used to collect data for the study. This presents the interview notes, and class observation recordings/notes.

Class observation recordings/notes. Class observations were conducted by the researchers to the online classes conducted by the participants. This observation guild to verify the experiences shared by both participants during the interview sessions. Whatever responses transpired during the sessions, the researchers would be able to confirm it through this observation.

Interview notes. Interview sessions were conducted to both participants of the study. Their responses to the corresponding questions stipulated in the validated

interview guide served as the main data of the study. Hence, they were asked as to their experiences – the challenges, the support taken and the like, their views on gamification and recommendations they could provide to improve the integration of gamification in the online classroom.

To analyze the collected data taken from the transcription of interview session/s, thematic coding will be used. Thematic coding is a process that involves sorting of data and assigning them to categories. The purpose of data coding is to summarize it meaningfully. The data coder ascertains that none of the important points of the data have been lost in data coding (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

E. Role of the Researcher

The term phenomenology is derived from the Greek 'phainein', which means 'to appear', and it was first used by Immanuel Kant in 1764. Kantian phenomenology is based on constructivist philosophy for the reason that the phenomena are constructed by a cognitive subject who is human being. In the constructionist view, the subject constructs what it knows, and in the phenomenological view, the subject knows what it constructs which is not appearance but it has appearance in the consciousness (Rockmore, 2011). The aims of phenomenological research are to reach the essence of the individuals' lived experience of the phenomenon while ascertaining and defining the phenomenon (Cilesiz, 2010).

With this, in this study, the researchers acted as observers and facilitators in the conduct of the study. They just then consolidated the participants' responses - as to the challenges, support, views and recommendations on the implementation of gamification. Thorough interpretation of the responses followed through thematic analysis.

F. Methods of Validation

The interview guide was validated by two (2) PhD instructors of the academe and one (1) teacher from the Department of Education (DepEd). Moreover, the class observations were conducted to further probe the responses given by both participants during the interview sessions.

RESULTS

In this section, the researchers present the results of the investigation. The primary purpose is to provide answers to the research problem presented in chapter 1. The presentation follows in this manner: (1) experiences of instructors and students in using gamification during online learning; (2) instructors and students' view on gamification; (3) improvement of gamification in online learning. Presented in table 1 are the emerging themes in every research statement:

Table 1. Emerging Themes from the Participants' Interview

| Research Statements | Emerging Themes |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Experiences of instructors and students in using gamification during online learning; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ difficulty in exploring the 21st century teaching and learning environment;+ seen the positive effects of using digital tools in instructional delivery;+ difficulty in accessing stable internet connectivity. |
| 2. Instructors and students' views on gamification; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ creates and provides opportunity for participation;+ supplement learning in the online classroom;+ have seen that it still cannot replace traditional classroom set-up. |
| 3. Improvement of gamification in online learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ regulation on the use of gamification in instruction;+ appropriate integration of gamification in instruction;+ choosing a user and information-friendly e-game;+ provide students aid for gadgets/technology |

DISCUSSION

1. Experiences of Instructors and Students in using Gamification During Online Learning

This section presents the Instructors and Students' experiences in gamification during distance learning. The presentation follows these themes: (a) difficulty exploring the 21st century teaching and learning environment; (b) seen the positive effects of digital tools in instructional delivery; (c) and difficulty in accessing stable internet connectivity.

Difficulty in exploring the 21st century teaching learning environment

With the emerging challenges brought by distant education, teaching and learning has a 360-degree paradigm shift like the mode of distance learning from the traditional face to face into an online learning which requires information and communication technology advantage. Teachers and students use various sources like technology to gather information needed in their respective classes. They explore the digital tools available on the internet, use programs and software to synthesize information or simply find the information they want. In other words, the advantage of technology nowadays is clearly embedded in instruction.

However, the interview conducted to both instructors and students revealed that students have difficulty in using the digital tools. Instructor 1 claimed that it would be difficult for his students to do the switching of apps like from Zoom meeting to google chrome when there is a need to participate in Quizziz or Kahoot apps. This is also supported by other faculty member who said that some students are not aware and used to these digital tools and it will take a long time for her to instruct the students on what to do. Another teacher also stressed that students are not yet familiar with the apps they are integrating in their respective classes. Moreover, students also admitted that they are not yet familiar with some apps used by their teachers in class. These were the words of the teachers and students–

“It would be difficult for my students to switch from Zoom for instance and then they are going to google chrome to participate in for example in kahoot, quizziz and other online platforms [Instructor 1, Appendix F, lines 18-20].

“They are not aware how to, they are not used to or they are not familiar on how to, how to join or how to do it. It took a long time to instruct the students, to inform them what to do while instructing how to do the game. Then a question will arise: how to do that, how to do this [Instructor 2, Appendix F, lines 39-44].

“Our instructors used apps that are new to us and so we need to deal with it. It’s difficult sometimes to interact with the app but we’ll get through this. Push lang [Student 3, Appendix G, line 8-9].

“The problem is that difficult talaga siya to explore since aside from bago, we also have to adjust with the new norm or their way of teaching us virtually [Student 5, Appendix G, lines 16-17].

The findings can be attributed to the implementation of flexible learning through CHED Memorandum Order No. 04, series 2020 in which the need to explore other innovative learning modalities that will facilitate migration from traditional to flexible teaching and learning options is urgent.

Seen the positive effects of digital tools in instructional delivery

It is very evident that 21st-century learners today are using digital tools to augment their learning. Teachers eagerly want to make their students improve their school performance and through technology, it can help them achieve it. Additionally, technology

in the classroom should make teachers' jobs easier without adding extra time to their day. Technology gives students easy-to-access information, accelerated learning, and interactive activities to apply what they learn and enable them to explore and deepen their understanding of difficult lesson contents (School of Education Online, 2020). Learners and teachers who use technology in their classes find it very effective and engaging. An increase in enthusiasm for teaching and learning with technology, an improvement in student writing skills, an increase of authentic and purposeful use of technology are some of the benefits of technology integration (Donovan, L., Hartley, K., & Strudler, N. (2007). Therefore, the use of technology for classroom instruction is imperative in the academe especially that we are still grappling with the threats of the pandemic.

In the present investigation and as found out during the interview among instructors and college students, English college instructors made use of the digital tools in instructional delivery. It was found out that teachers find the use of gamification very helpful in their class especially during this time that students have short attention spans. A teacher said that gamification stimulates the attention of her students and it serves as an attention catcher to them. Another instructor said that she finds it very informative especially that she is not so techy and does not explore a lot in the use of technology. Another faculty also supported that the use of gamification made her class more interactive and her students were motivated to join her class. On the other hand, students mentioned that their teachers allowed them to enrich their experiences in the use of gamification. Students have also added that the school and stakeholders provided support in their use of gamification through webinars and tutorials to maximize their use.

This result suggests that the Technology Assistance Model (TAM) which focuses on modeling computer users and showing them how they can accept and adopt a new technology works well with these teachers and students. The perceived usefulness component in Technology Acceptance Model is the degree to which a computer system user believes that using a particular computer system will enhance his or her performance (Opoku, 2020). It usually refers to consumers' perceptions based on the outcome of their experience. On the other hand, the perceived ease of use of the system is how a user accepts and agrees that using an existing model is not costly. The instructors claimed that–

“Employing Gamification in my online classes is quite helpful because every time I use it, I can easily catch the attention of my students [Instructor 1, Appendix F, lines 11-12].

“When it comes to the positive effect, of course it stimulates the attention of the students. Somewhat it serves as an attention catcher to the students [Instructor 2, Appendix F, lines 127-128].

“I do not have a lot of experiences but so far, I find it very informative especially to me because I am not that really techy and I do not really explore a lot [Instructor 3, Appendix F, lines 68-69].

“I think in general, it made my class more interactive and ahm, the students are also more motivated to join, participate in class, because I think they miss the interaction with the teachers for two years of using module [Instructor 4, Appendix F, lines 75-77].

“It really made my role as facilitator very smooth and easy. Thanks to technology [Instructor 5, Appendix F, line 80-81].

“I find gamification as positive because it’s fun, the level of engagement tends to be higher which leads to increased retention. It is very helpful in today's new normal of education [Student 3, Appendix F].

As narrated by college instructors, they perceived gamification as integrated in their instruction as an aid to foster students’ engagement. To answer the growing problem especially in students’ engagement, made by adjustments to remote learning, research on technology integration and utilization in the English language teaching (ELT) classroom to enhance the teaching of English as second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL) has been popular in recent years because of its pedagogical contributions. Teachers, policy makers, and education scholars believe that technology integration supports both the teachers’ pedagogical practices and the students’ learning improvement (Costley, 2014; Parvin & Salam, 2015). College instructors also claimed that this integration is an essential tool in teaching and learning. This technology integration has been narrowed down by Gilakjani (2017), in his study, to educational games (EG) which are found to be as an effective learning tool as stated in various literatures. Garris et al (2015) have found that EGs are able to help students on various learning domains such as cognitive, affective as well as psychomotor skills. Among the EG findings that is widely discussed, is its ability to increase student motivation to learn. One of the most important factors in education is motivation to learn. This motivation to learn is supported by the claims of students during the interviews as seen in the transcripts.

Difficulty in accessing stable internet connectivity

The report by Akamai Technologies states that, the Philippines’ 5.5 Mbps average internet connection speed is the slowest among 15 Asia Pacific countries (Porcalla, 2018 May). This situation has implications in the teaching and learning environment especially that today’s distance learning mostly relies on strong and fast internet connection. Indeed, during the interviews of both instructors and college students, this was one of their concerns, the slow internet connection in their respective areas. In fact, all teachers unanimously said that one major problem that they encounter in integrating gamification is the poor and unstable internet connection. Even the students during the interview also stressed the same plight.

This is despite the fact of the RA 11494 or the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act enacted on September 11, 2020 which appropriated 300 million for education subsidy to eligible students and 3 billion for grants to State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) for their Smart Campus Development projects. The CHED Smart Campus Development

Project provided grants of a maximum of PhP25 million each to State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) for their project proposals designed to improve the implementation of flexible learning such as upgrading of internet connectivity, campus area network, learning management system, learner information system, smart classrooms, computer center for students, or multi-media center for faculty (Commission for Higher Education, 2021).

“When it comes to the challenges in using it, of course on top of the list would be the internet connection. There are students who cannot participate well because their internet connection is not that really stable or good [Instructor 1, Appendix F].

“Problems and challenges were first and foremost on the instructors’ end is internet connection, still connectivity, ahm it’s very hard on our part especially if there is no stable internet connection to conduct the online class [Instructor 2, Appendix F].

“I think, the prominent problem is the internet connection because, although they have encountered problems in the application, but with the very slow connection I was not able to directly teach them how to manipulate the application [Instructor 4, Appendix F].

“Poor connection, no stable internet connection, and bad processes of the apps are the problems and challenges that I observed [Student 4, Appendix F].

“So far, the difficulties of using are it, is the low Internet connection while I am answering, the time run so fast together with the low connection and the pressure [Student 6, Appendix F]

2. Instructors and Students’ View on Gamification

This section presents the instructors and students’ view on gamification during online learning. The presentation follows these themes: (a) creates and provides opportunity for participation; (b) supplement learning in the online classroom; and (c) cannot replace traditional classroom set-up.

Creates and provides opportunity for participation

Moving a course an instructor designed from face-to-face delivery to a fully online “remote teaching” environment undoubtedly poses certain challenges. In a traditional classroom, students’ engagement is already a challenge, how much more to online modality where we are fenced by computer screens. Although some aspects of the face-to-face course may remain unchanged; others, however, will have to adjust to accommodate the new ways in which students will be interacting with the course materials, and with each other (Ray, 2020). One seen way is through the use of gamification in an online classroom. The interview conducted to both teachers and students revealed that gamification provides opportunity for participation, and not just

listening to an entire discussion. Another faculty member also reiterated that it stimulates the attention of the students to learn. On the part of the students, they believe that gamification gives more positive impacts than its negatives, as it enhances critical thinking skills, creates a fun-learning environment, and helps everyone to be motivated and inspired in the class. These responses cohere to the study of Gilakjani (2017), of which he found out that educational games (EG) are effective learning tools as stated in various literatures. Garris et al (2015) also have found that EGs are able to help students on various learning domains such as cognitive, affective as well as psychomotor skills. Among the EG findings that is widely discussed, is its ability to increase student motivation to learn. Here are the words of both teachers and students:

“kailangan nating gamitin itong platform na iyo, ahm of course, ahm, because it gives or it creates interaction noh or participation with your students and of course I think, ahm, it provide learning activities to the students noh. So yun. And I see it na parang nag e-enjoy sila noh, I see it na nag e-enoy sila if there is this kind of ano, of platform na hindi lang into listening on you know discussions like gmeet or zoom noh. So yun ang nakikita ko why positive siya for the students kasi ahm nag mo more participate yung mga students in attending our class because they are expecting mga ganitong kinds of games noh, or ganitong kind of platform na ginagamit for their quizzes, hindi lang siya ahm, ano hindi lang siya focusing on the topic or on the discussion but nag eenjoy sila” [Instructor 3, Appendix F]

“but ah I think in general, it made my class more interactive and ahm, the students are also more motivated to join, participate in class” [Instructor 4]

“For me, it is positive. Because gamification helps everyone to be motivated and inspired during classes.” [Student 7]

“Positive because it will enhanced the critical thinking skills of students by participating the gamification class.” [Student 3]

Supplement learning in the online classroom

Researchers have found gamification to stimulate students' learning since this particular approach gives learners incentives to strive and persist in their studies (McNulty, 2021). Another positive aspect viewed by both teachers and students is the ability of gamification to supplement learning in the online classroom. Both respondents believe that it can aid learning, whenever used properly. One faculty member even highlighted that the integration of gamification in the main discussion is a big help for her, aside from it, being fun. On the other hand, students' general answers feature that since online learning hampers them to do hands-on activities, gamification makes it possible; thus, supplement their learning in the classroom. With the feedback provided by the online platform, students can actually see how close they are to their goals. Meanwhile, the study of Pahamzah et al (2020), reviewed the generations of learners that teach today and how these generations impacted the transformation of education. He also presented

some of the emerging technologies and discussed the transformation to invent new forms of teaching and learning as well as redesigning and rethinking education in the digital era. Results showed that usage of educational games like *quizziz* as a learning media can make students enthusiastic in participating in learning activities, so students can focus and maximize their mobile phone as a fun learning media. Here are the respondents' responses, verbatimly:

“In my way of thinking I can say that it is a positive because of this Gamification aside of having fun we also learned and it supplement our understanding about the given topic.” [Student 10]

“it supplement the understanding of the students for me because once you do the gamification so during your topics in the gamification will be integrated to your main topic during class so while explaining during the discussion you can go back to the game that you did a while ago and then you connect the lesson itself so the topic or the understanding of the students of the topic I think for me will become concrete.” [Instructor 5]

Moreover, according to McNulty (2021), besides the motivating stimulus gamification offers, it also gives learners immediate feedback which makes work exciting and engaging; gives students the ability to 'own' their learning – learning becomes more self-directed; makes the long-term benefits of learning more immediately recognizable and tangible; and makes learning more fun by increasing interactivity. This claim was supported by one of the students' responses, stating:

“Gamification allows users to see how close they are to their set goals through feedback provided by the game providers. As such, children learn a very important aspect of judging how far or how close they are to their goals as determined by the feedback they get.” [Student 1]

These responses can be directly associated with TAM's first component, perceived usefulness. As participants, both instructors and students believe that educational games enhance students' performance in an online class as gamification supplements learning in the classroom. This is supported by Opoku's (2020) claim which states that perceived usefulness usually refers to consumers' perceptions based on the outcome of their experience, and that is to enhance one's performance.

Cannot replace traditional classroom set-up

A traditional classroom is where an instructor moderates and regulates the flow of information and knowledge. Students are expected to continue developing their knowledge of a subject outside of school through homework exercises. Here, students' main resource is their instructor who only teaches them face-to-face (Traditional Classroom Definition and Meaning | Top Hat, 2020). With the pandemic, educational

sectors crafted their own continuity learning plan so that education can continue to thrive amidst the face-to-face hindrances. Institutions were forced to leave the traditional classrooms to move to the virtual ones such as Zoom and Google Meet. Instructors welcomed a lot of innovations to still make the learning environment not far from what we consider 'traditional'.

With every innovation comes pros and cons - so with how gamification can offer. However, when weighed on the impacts provided by gamification in online learning, the interview done to both respondents transpired that it has more perceived usefulness than the cautions. Although, it is also equally important to note these. One is that online learning cannot replace the traditional classroom set-up. Although the academe tried to embrace the new normal world through a lot of initiatives and innovations - from attending to various webinars and workshops, to equipping new skills relevant to teach 21st century learners in the pandemic - none of these actually prepared us for the battle the pandemic has brought. As a result, though both participants made mention in the interview that gamification is fun and offers a pleasant, energetic and motivating online classroom, it still cannot replace what a traditional classroom can provide where students can do the activities in a collaborative way. One faculty member also stated that gamification, if not used properly, just focusing on games may hamper learning.

Moreover, with the online modality, instructors observed that there is too much screen time, especially with the conduct of games. Instructors can only control the game through the time limit set but as to the possibility of opening their notebooks or other ways to answer questions, cannot be contained.

“namimiss natin yung dati noh, so it doesn't really replace the traditional learning setup or strategies, so, mas maganda parin yung ahm face to face tayo and something na nakikita natin yung isa't-isa on how to do such work noh. And of course, ahm, napansin ko lang na when it comes to this platform, yung sa online.” [Instructor 5]

On this note, students also gave another observation connected to having it in the traditional classroom. For them, a real classroom gives an opportunity for different learning styles than that of an online classroom. But just like any other classroom, any innovation done may or may not work with other students since no approach can be tailored-fit for everybody (Napanan, 2021). With this, students claim that:

“Gamification is a powerful strategy that can yield fantastic results for the students. however, it can bring a negative effect that doesn't work with the rest of students learning because of the new setup outside the traditional classroom.” [Student 3]

On this note, in the context of gamification, instructors should be well aware of this one caution seen in the responses. Deciding to gamify a learning activity on the assumption that everyone loves a game is another “wrong” reason to use gamification

(Kapp, 2013). Evaluating the audience that will be participating in the activity is an important step in the design process. Some students love games and competition, but others do not. Instructors should then use an approach that will appeal to their specific group of students.

In general, with the prevailing themes through the participants' responses, it can be gleaned that although instructors and students claim that online learning still cannot replace the learning environment of the traditional classroom, in the context of gamification, their views on gamification generally pose positive impacts stating that it creates and provides an avenue for participation and supplements the learning experience. With this, to optimally use its advantage in distance learning, an appropriate time of integrating it should then be considered.

3. Improvement of Gamification in Online Learning

This section presents the instructors and students' view on how to improve the use of gamification in online learning. The presentation follows these themes: (a) regulation on the use of gamification in instruction; (b) integration of gamification in instruction; (c) user and information friendly; and (d) aid for gadgets/technology.

Regulation on the use of gamification in instruction

An essential component of facilitating learning is understanding learners. The learning styles, attitudes and approaches of high school students differ from those of twenty-two-year-old university students (Oblinger, 2013). Research shows new generations of students are fundamentally different from former generations, mostly because of changes in their media consumption patterns (Bourgonjon, Valcke, Soetaert & Schellens, 2009). This generation of students grew up using hypertexts, social networking sites and video games. Thus it is argued that these students have gained specific technical skills, new ways of thinking and different learning preferences, which require a new educational approach (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2011; Bourgonjon et al, 2009).

Thus, the study sought to get recommendations from the participants through their lived experiences. With their lived experiences, participants were able to give their recommendations as to how to improve the integration of gamification in online learning. One prevailing theme is the regulation on the use of gamification in instruction. The instructions have noted not only the challenges they have met, but also more to the students as they conduct online classes. With the mentioned challenges above, instructors believe that there should be an appropriate schedule for conducting gamification so students can also prepare as to their load subscription. One instructor proposed:

“so maybe as instructors we will only employ gamification once a week or maybe twice a week, we really need to control the use of gamification because not all students have the luxury of the gadgets, luxury of the internet connection” [Instructor 4]

This was also supported by another faculty member stating that the implementation of the game to the students should be done in a gradual introduction; thus, should not be conducted or integrated on an everyday basis.

Appropriate integration of gamification in instruction

To help cater for different learning styles and those new to contemporary pedagogy, instructors and instructional designers need to effectively use elements of gaming in an educational context. Many theories have been suggested to account for the positive effect of games in learning. One is that, in order to move to higher levels of play, games require individuals to use prior knowledge, transfer new information into new situations, apply information in correct contexts, and learn from immediate feedback (Oblinger, 2004; Ozelik et al., 2013).

In context, another prevailing theme revealed by participants is the integration of gamification in the instruction. Instructors pointed out that there should be an appropriate part of the discussion to integrate gamification so that students can always prepare for it:

“like if we condition already the kind of the students that gamification will always be part of the online classes like if they can understand that really gamify is like its normal already that every online class there should be a gamify, I think in due time, students may have appreciated or may take gamification as normal as new normal part of teaching and learning process.” [Instructor 1]

Another instructor supported this claim recommending specific parts of the discussion where it should be integrated:

“it can also be used in some parts only of the discussion like during the review or during the motivation.” [Instructor 2]

He further emphasized the role of limited time as one of the disadvantages in integrating gamification during the assessment part:

“As per experience, employing or using gamification in the assessment part is quite difficult because there is a time limit and the students don’t like it. So, as for my classes, I don’t employ gamification in the assessment. I only apply it during the motivation part or the review.”

Choosing a user and information friendly e-game

TAM's second component, perceived ease of use of the system refers to how a user accepts and agrees that using an existing model is not costly. Therefore, it is not hard or difficult to understand the perceived innovation (Opoku, 2020). This component can be noted in the interview conducted to the participants. Both instructors and students believe that the instructions and directions on how to navigate the platform should be simple and friendly, especially for those who are not techy. Although educational sites have a lot of features to be employed and can be enjoyed, instructors should still try to elaborate difficult things in a simpler manner, so that students will not be hesitant to use it and will not have an initial negative attitude towards the platform. One instructor highlighted to keep it simple:

“So, ahm, very simple lang siguro yung ano ko, yung suggestions ko. Maybe for me, just keep it simple, make it a people-friendly platform noh or site for both students and teachers kasi there are times talaga na on the first time talaga, parang hesitant tayo gamitin because pagdating palang dun sa letterboard sa site nay un, pag medyo critical yung introduction maybe or yung letterboard niya parang hesitant na tayong gamitin so make it simple lang and I think it is more useful noh for both kung magiging simple lang yung dating niya.” [Instructor 5]

This was supported by another faculty narrating that gamification should be translated to students as a fun learning experience, instead of a hassle:

“less engagement a simpler way of accessing the game maybe but just using their email add or maybe by just accessing directly using their school ID. What I'm trying to say is lesser a hassle in the end of the students in accessing the game would be better like no need to download the app or I think that's it. Ahm, the use suggestion in the use of gamification for the instructors and constantly using it in every online class you have for the students to be aware or to love it or present the gamify in a funny way or simple yet ahm worthy game that would be part of the class or discussion.”

The same suggestions were given from the point of view of the students. Making things simpler for them is a great leap of help:

“the instructors should provide learners a clear explanation and provide ways that can obtain knowledge in easy and clear way through improving their way of approaching or instructing students in online class.”

Aid for gadgets/technology

As we move forward, the continual growth of information technologies requires that educators engaging in distance education look for new methods and theories for designing and delivering effective teaching (Picciano, 2001). As more and more courses

and programs move online, it is critical for instructors to understand culture relevant to online course structure expectations (Lee et al., 2012). Thus, the last prevailing theme common to both instructor and students - the giving of aid for gadgets or technology amongst respondents.

For the instructors, school initiatives have been given already to augment the need for gadgets so that online learning will continue to thrive. However, this would still be useless if students will not be receiving the same amount of support from the institution and other stakeholders. With this, respondents pointed out some suggestions highlighting the need for gadgets. For the instructors, providing assistance to technology would be the best aid:

“I think ahm, the best suggestion that I can give is that maybe if the budget would allow, we can provide our students with ahm, technologies that they can use for the online class whether it would be in form of ahm, smartphones or in tablets, because other schools, ahm, were able to do that, and not just exposing them to webinars on how to use them noh but I think the main problem here is that the students do not have the gadgets ahm and that ahm they have difficulty looking or having stable connection”

Students also pointed out their recommendations align to the suggestions pointed out by the instructors:

“My suggestion is that if possible school must provide a gadgets to the student who not have an technology access so that everybody can have access in games because this Games have been a way for children to spend their free time while having fun on the computer or smartphones. These games not only allow children to relax but also increases their ability to multitask.”

· “ Giving of free pocket wifi to those students who are in the areas that has poor signal”

In general, with the consolidated lived experiences of both participants, here are their seen points need of revision to better the implementation of gamification in an online classroom: (a) regulation on the use of gamification in instruction; (b) integration of gamification in instruction; (c) choosing a user and information friendly e-game; and (d) aid for gadgets/technology.

Conclusions

Based on the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. College instructors and students are still exploring the different digital technologies. This suggests that given the right opportunities, they can eventually traverse the 21st century teaching and learning environment with ease especially in this trying time. Moreover, instructors and students also experienced problems in the use of gamification such as the limited training, poor and unstable internet connection.

However, the provision of technical assistance from the school such as load and sharing of practices was evident.

2. Both instructors and learners view gamification as an irreplaceable tool in their quest for learning. Initiatives from the school and other stakeholders in helping both college instructors and students were evident.
3. College instructors showed their classroom practices in the use of gamification in the teaching and learning process. They also emphasized proper regulation and integration of gamification in instruction as essential in achieving the learning outcomes of the course. Moreover, they pointed out the pivotal role of internet connection to a wholesome implementation of the course; thus, stakeholders and the institution should make this support a priority.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended:

Instructors. Course instructors are encouraged to review and revisit their course syllabus, now adding the integration of gamification in their online classes. A schedule as to the regulation of gamification in class should be reflected to guide and help students prepare in the specific session. This could also be done by college for more innovative strategies that seek to assist both instructors and students in the implementation.

Dean for Academics. The Dean for Academics is motivated to guide and support the crafting of a general online learning plan. A plan assigning each department of their schedule in integrating gamification in classes may be done.

Administration. As one of the extension activities of the institution, the administration should assist the adopted barangays through concrete programs highly relevant in the needs of the time. As internet connection is concerned, wireless internet connection points in adopted barangays may be provided for the student-residents there.

Alumni. NEMSU-Lianga alumni are encouraged to form social groups or programs in raising funds for the less-privileged students who have zero access to technology. These gadgets would truly be of help for students to still continue online learning during this distance education.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researchers sought permission from the Dean of Academic to conduct the study. A letter of consent was given to both participants informing them of the objectives and their roles in the study. With the student-participants, it was agreed that no pictures

of them during class observations would be posted in any form of social media. Responses shared by both participants were also taken with utmost confidentiality.

Moreso, there were no sensitive topics involved in the study. Students who opted not to continue participating in the study were allowed by withdrawing their consent to become participants. Their decision also not to answer follow-up questions were respected. The researchers valued their participation and placed their welfare as their highest priority during the study. Further, the researcher kept their records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study remained confidential, except if necessary to protect the participants rights or welfare. The researchers can resist the release of information about their participation to people who are not connected with the study. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no identifiable information will be used. The conduct and results of this study is for research and education purposes only.

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