

Integrating the game "Diplomacy" in a business school

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Summary

Gamification and its application in the field of higher education is an increasingly established trend. Present educational currents are committed to the benefits of models in which teachers may become facilitators of inclusive environments to promote the protagonism and participation of students (Jiménez et al., 2019). At the same time, the learning environment must favour the development of positive academic emotions (Lonka and Ketonen, 2012). Business schools, as bridges between university and businesses, are in a key position where different activities can stimulate and simulate real environments (Jurše and Matjaž 2011).

This study is integrated within the subject "Commercial Negotiation", where a group of undergraduate Marketing students (n = 39) at ESIC Business & Marketing School (Valencia campus) were able to develop cooperative tools and competitive incentives by playing the "Diplomacy" board game in its online version for two weeks. The game has demonstrated to be effective in other academic areas thanks to its outstanding combination of theoretical and practical skills (Kruskopf, Ketonen and Mattlin, 2021).

During the execution of the study, the negotiation simulations with this game allowed practising negotiation both individually and in teams and the development of conflict management. The balance of the use of games linked to the theoretical content, allows students to reflect on the real application of the academic goals while facilitating learning about the necessary skills in the negotiation of conflicts and their resolution in real life. This connection is aligned with the importance of linking academic content with student's lives and their future careers (OECD, 2019: 79).

Project description

- ✓ During the execution of the study, the negotiation simulations with this game allowed practicing negotiation both individually and in teams and the development of conflict management.
- ✓ The teachers prepared step-by-step guidelines to explain the objectives of the game, the rules, existing tutorials as well as its dynamics.
- ✓ They played two independent games (A and B) and simultaneously. Lecturers could monitor all in-game communication as well as intervene and support students in case of doubts.
- ✓ The game depicts seven nations at the beginning of the 20th century vying with each other for territorial supremacy in Europe.

- ✓ All players can interact with each other simultaneously in writing during each turn. Teachers can monitor the exchange of messages.
- ✓ Lying to other players about one's intentions is allowed.
- ✓ The students were randomly distributed between the two games in groups of 3 people and a group of only 2. In total, 7 teams in each game, corresponding to the maximum number of players. Each team represented one of the participating nations.
- ✓ When it comes to playing time, during the two weeks of duration, decisions had to be made every 24 hours, the turns changing automatically outside office hours. During in-class period, an hour of class was reserved for them to plan their strategies.
- ✓ Students were assessed by handing out a report where they integrated the theoretical elements into the performance of the game. Extra points were given, based on the final position at the end of the two weeks.

Findings

The projects analysed the integration of the game and how the students were engaged in the activity. Thus, two questionnaires were performed (Likert's scale from 1-4), one before starting the activity, once given the explanations, and the second one when the game concluded.

There was a slight difference in the sample size. (total universe: 39 students)

- Pre-activity: sample of 30 answers from students
- Post-activity: sample of 35 answers from students.

PRE-ACTIVITY	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation
I am interested in participating in the activity	3.167	1.006	1.003
My motivation is increasing as I get to know the game more.	2.867	1.382	1.176

POST-ACTIVITY	Average	Variance	Standard Deviation
My motivation increased as I got to know the game	3.200	0.903	0.950
The activity has been satisfactory and is properly integrated into the course	2.886	1.301	1.141

Conclusions:

- Before starting the game, once explained, students were interested in performing the activity, but their motivation level was low and the standard deviation was high.
- After the activity, the student's motivation increased and also the standard deviation decreased, showing that in general the development of introducing a game activity within the course is motivational to students, doing something innovative.
- On the other hand, we found that regardless the increased motivation the selected game "Diplomacy" was not satisfactory and not entirely integrated into the course.

Conclusions

The results obtained, after the activity, indicated a positive assessment of it by the students, although they did not interpret it as a seamless integration within the course. Including games as part of the educational activities is motivating students, but it is necessary to be careful in the game selection, to be appropriately integrated with course contents.

The balance of the use of games linked to the theoretical content, allows students to ponder on the real application of the academic goals while facilitating learning about the necessary skills in the negotiation of conflicts and their resolution.

Fig. 1 Final result of game A

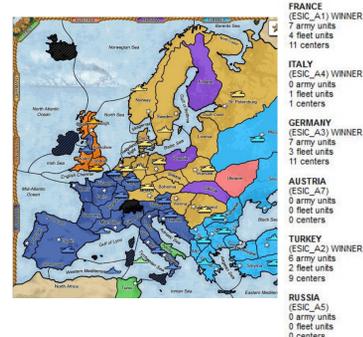
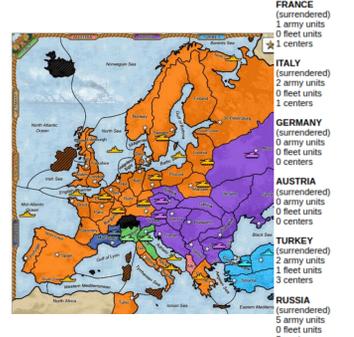


Fig. 2 Final result of game B



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