Competency's Fourth Pillar and Media Literacy

Gamify+: Enhancing Organizational Capacity through Hybrid Gaming

There's already a long history of using competencies in education, both non-formal and formal, instead of or to complement existing, more traditional curricula. This approach is empowered by the works of The European Commission. This body works with EU Member States to support and reinforce the development of key competencies and basic skills for all, from an early age and throughout life. Key competencies include knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by all for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. [https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/key-competences]

The prevailing model of what competency is has the form of a pyramid (and those, as Dale has proven, can be very misleading; Dale's pyramid created as a catchy illustration is famously derived from any stable base of research, ironically bringing to mind one of Sir Terry Pratchett's quotes from the Pyramids novel: 'The role of listeners has never been fully appreciated. However, it is well known that most people don't listen. They use the time when someone else is speaking to think of what they're going to say next. True Listeners have always been revered among oral cultures, and prized for their rarity value'; the late creator of 'Discworld' was the undersigned inspiration to use commenting in brackets in a way you, dear reader, are experiencing them at the moment). What I believe is a more complete form transpired in the works of OECD, crystalizing for them under the label 'Global Competence'.

To paint a clearer picture, I will use the example of Jesus Christ (this, very loud, example - chosen to enforce your memory - doesn't necessarily reflect the beliefs of the author who could have used Muhammad instead, but He, unlike the other He, was NOT a carpenter) - a carpenter. One needs to be full of **knowledge** regarding tools, materials or processes to make a lasting piece of furniture. One needs to be **skilled** in order not to hit their fingers instead of a nail. One needs to have the right **attitude** (aka motivation) to invest time to work and not to, for example, sleep those few minutes longer. And the traditional, triangle-shaped model would end here; a lot of people argue that values are entwined within attitudes. But even writing about the fact that personal values reflect across all the competency's elements, should make it clear that those are two separate elements. Hence, the a need to revisit the general competence model. On this note, let's return to our carpenter - that person has it all - skills, knowledge and the right attitude, and then we have values: with one set of them the chair made is a very comfortable addition to our living room, with another we are dealing with an elaborate torture device (and then we have a possibility for that chair to be a spawn of modern art (one sometimes wonders...)). Formal education is usually defined by two elements - knowledge and skills. Such an approach is understandable as those two elements are the easiest ones to be judged, turned into numbers, and assessed for the sake of the process from the perspective of the system preparing the future workforce. This results in a format that frustrates educators, who - chasing curricula - are pointing out that students too often end without motivation or a way how to translate their school experience into 'real life'. In the meantime, a lot of researchers point out that teachers are more influential than parents. [https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-what-almost-150-studies-say-about-how-to-motivate-students/] With that in mind, it should be clear that focusing on competencies can easily change the narrative.

What's left to discuss briefly is the fourth pilar on which stands the promoted model of a competency - VALUES. Values are the fundamental beliefs and principles that guide our thoughts, decisions, and actions. The value theory (Schwartz, 1992, 2006a) adopts a conception of values that specifies six main features that are implicit in the writings of many theorists:

(1) Values are beliefs linked inextricably to affect.
(2) Values refer to desirable goals that motivate action.
(3) Values transcend specific actions and situations.
(4) Values serve as standards or criteria.
(5) Values are ordered by importance relative to one another.
(6) The relative importance of multiple values guides action.

[https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1116&context=orpc]

Here's why VALUES are important in education:

- **Character Development:** Education goes beyond just acquiring knowledge and skills. It's about shaping well-rounded individuals with strong moral compasses. Values education helps individuals develop positive character traits like honesty, integrity, empathy, and respect for others.

- **Ethical Decision-Making**: In today's complex world, individuals are constantly faced with ethical dilemmas. A strong foundation in values equips individuals to make responsible choices that align with their beliefs and contribute to a just society.

- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving**: Values can serve as a framework for critical thinking. They help us analyze situations, consider various perspectives, and make informed decisions that reflect our core beliefs. This is directly linked to Media Literacy which is the basis for our work within the project that gave you this booklet.

- **Global Citizenship**: Understanding and appreciating different values is essential for living in a diverse and interconnected world. Values education fosters tolerance, cooperation, and a sense of global responsibility.

- **Motivation and Self-Esteem**: Living according to one's values can be a source of motivation and personal fulfilment. It fosters a sense of purpose and self-worth, contributing to a positive self-image.

One might dive deeper into the subject of competencies-based education (CBE), and go in the direction of assessment, so important for any education process. The best summary we can think of is the following. Assessment is an integral part of instruction, as it determines whether or not the goals of education are being met. Assessment affects decisions about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum, and, in some cases, funding. Assessment inspire us to ask these hard questions: "Are we teaching what we think we are teaching?" "Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?" "Is there a way to teach the subject better, thereby promoting better learning?" [Edutopia, https://www.edutopia.org/assessment-guide-importance] And then, that same One can ask how to measure values…?

While measuring knowledge and skills can be done through standardized tests, measuring VALUES is a more complex endeavour. The approach we could recommend is the indirect one:

- **Observation:** Observing behaviour in different situations can provide insights into an individual's values. For example, how someone treats others, their level of honesty, and their willingness to help can reflect their underlying values.
- **Self-Reflection**: Encouraging self-reflection and journaling can help individuals identify their core values and explore how they influence their actions.
- **Scenarios and Discussions**: Presenting hypothetical scenarios and facilitating discussions can reveal how individuals approach ethical dilemmas and the values they prioritize in decision-making.

Challenges and Considerations:

- **Subjectivity**: Values are inherently subjective and influenced by cultural background, personal experiences, and beliefs. There's no single "correct" answer when measuring values.
- **Self-reporting Bias**: Individuals may not always report their values truthfully, especially if it goes against social norms or expectations.

On top of the above, we strongly believe that GAMES (be that LARPs or Board Games or hybrid gaming, about which you will be able to learn more in the next texts and/or booklets) are providing educators with a wonderful space where participants-players can grow and be assessed as learners.

Let's now move to Media Literacy as the main competency actor in our tale. We have chosen it as the main target as it is a critical competency in the modern, digital era. And for several reasons.

Importance of Media Literacy in the 21st Century:

- Information Overload and Fake News: The 21st century is characterized by an explosion of information from various media sources. Media literacy empowers individuals to critically evaluate information, identify bias, and discern fact from fiction. This is crucial to combat the spread of misinformation and "fake news."
- Evolving Media Landscape: The way we consume and interact with media is constantly changing. Media literacy equips individuals with the skills to adapt to new technologies and platforms, allowing them to be responsible and discerning consumers of media.
- Active Citizenship and Participation: In today's interconnected world, informed citizens are essential for a healthy democracy. Media literacy fosters the ability to analyze media messages, understand how media shapes perceptions, and engage in responsible civic participation.
- Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Media literacy skills like analysis, evaluation, and interpretation are essential for critical thinking and problem-solving in all aspects of life.
- Lifelong Learning and Adaptability: The 21st century demands continuous learning and adaptation to rapid change. Media literacy empowers individuals to effectively navigate the ever-evolving information landscape and become lifelong learners.

Having in mind that the assessment of media literacy is a complex task, which might attempt to reconcile a research field traditionally developed within a critical paradigm with the task of evaluating and quantifying media literacy competencies through essentially quantitative methods. [https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1579&context=jmle]

We wanted to propose the above-mentioned game-based model. In it education learning and evaluation seamlessly blend through engaging activities from the spectrum of Game Bsed Learning (using existing titles, gamification and game design). Imagine students solving mysteries, building virtual worlds or game mechanics, or competing in educational challenges – all while demonstrating their knowledge and skills and actively researching the matter at hand. This approach goes beyond traditional tests, offering a dynamic and enjoyable way to learn and assess learning.

Some benefits include **Increased Motivation and Engagement, Deeper Understanding and Skill Application, Personalized Feedback and Learning, Assessment of Multiple Skills, Reduced Anxiety** (i.e. caused by exams). All while being powerful tools for exploring and shaping values by including **Moral Dilemmas and Choices** in mechanisms/stories, through which one can work on **Empathy and Understanding of Others** by allowing players to step into the shoes of different characters; not to mention showing **Consequences and Responsibility for Actions or Motivation and Values in Action**, and of course when engaged in a group experience working on **Socialization and noticing Shared Values**.

Examples (from commercial titles available on the market):
- Cooperation Games: Games like Pandemic or Paleo require players to work together towards a common goal, highlighting the importance of cooperation and shared values for success.
- Resource Management Games: Games like Brass Birmingham or Terraforming Mars often involve balancing resource allocation and decision-making, potentially reflecting values like sustainability and responsible resource management.
- Narrative-Driven Games: Games with rich narratives can explore complex moral themes, prompting players to reflect on their values and those presented in the story, like Lands of Galzyr or Near and Far.

Overall, games can be a stimulating and interactive way to explore human values, encouraging players to reflect on their own beliefs and the impact of their choices. By incorporating game-based assessments, educators can gain richer insights into student learning and create a more engaging and effective learning experience. It's a win-win for both educators and students!

And that's not all. Game design process on its own, and connected to it the design thinking, awards contemporary students greatly, and deserves brief exploration.

The game design process encompasses a multilayered approach that takes many steps, from ideation to final development. It typically begins with concept generation, where designers brainstorm ideas and explore potential game themes, mechanics, and narratives. This is followed by prototyping, where initial versions of the game are created to test and refine the core gameplay elements. Design variations and feedback are essential components of the process, as designers continually refine their ideas based on user testing and evaluation.

Design thinking, a human-centered approach to problem-solving, has become increasingly relevant in the field of game design. It emphasizes empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing, fostering a collaborative and ever-evolving process that puts the user at the center of the design. By understanding the needs, desires, and motivations of players, game designers can create more engaging and meaningful experiences.

For contemporary students, embracing the game design process and the principles of design thinking offers several benefits. It cultivates creativity, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking abilities - all essential in the strengthening of the Media Literacy competency. Students learn to think outside the box, generate innovative ideas, and adapt to changing circumstances. Moreover, the collaborative nature of game design fosters teamwork, communication, and interpersonal skills... Terry Pratchett famously coined a saying Wisdom comes from experience. Experience is often a result of a lack of wisdom. Sadly, in the case of Media Literacy we can't afford to experience it with the lack of wisdom as it accumulates, due to its nature, across various competencies defining us as people in contemporary times. Hence, the following - a fun, game-based and engaging model, set of workshops, to promote the growth and development of individuals, while never forgetting about the fourth pillar of competency-based education.

Resources (assessment of Values):

- Character.org: This organization promotes character education and provides resources on integrating values education into the curriculum: https://character.org/
- Association for Moral Education: This organization advocates for moral education and offers resources for educators to foster ethical reasoning and values development: https://www.amenetwork.org/
- Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley: This research center explores the science of well-being and character development, offering resources on fostering positive values: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/

Resources (Media Literacy):

- UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers: This resource provides a framework for integrating media literacy education into various subject areas: https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/files/2022/02/Global%20Standards%20for%20Media%20and%20Information%20Literacy%20Curricula%20Development%20Guidelines_EN.pdf
- National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE): This organization offers a wealth of resources on media literacy education, including its core standards that define the essential competencies students should develop: https://namle.org/
- Center for Media Literacy: This non-profit organization provides various resources, including lesson plans and professional development opportunities, to help educators integrate media literacy into their classrooms: https://www.medialit.org/
- Global Alliance for Media and Information Literacy (GAMIL): This international organization promotes media literacy education worldwide. Their website offers various resources and case studies on integrating media literacy into education systems: https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy/alliance

Workshop Outline:

Reimagine & Educate: A Media Literacy Game Design Challenge

Target Audience: Participants of various ages (adaptable based on the difficulty level of the base game and the group's advancement in understanding the topic or game-based learning)

Duration: 2 hours (may vary)

Materials (may vary):
- Whiteboard/Flipchart with markers
- Sticky notes
- Markers/Coloring pencils/Scissors (for prototyping)
- Sample one-page, print-and-play, tabletop game (consider mechanics like dice rolling, card drafting, and resource management) - https://itch.io/physical-games/free/tag-dungeon-crawler/tag-print-and-play ; https://www.pnparcade.com/collections/free-games
  THE GAME USED DURING OUR PROJECT:
  https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/43691/delve-the-dice- game
- Copies of handouts with various media types [optional]

Workshop Structure:
1. Introduction if not done as a separate workshop (15 minutes):

    - Welcome participants and introduce the workshop concept: Reimagining a game to promote media literacy.
    - Briefly explain media literacy and its importance in today's information landscape.
    - Briefly showcase the sample tabletop game and its core mechanics.

2. Forming Teams & Understanding the Game (20 minutes):
   - Divide participants into small groups (ideally 3-5 people with a mix of ages if applicable).
   - Provide each group with a copy of the sample game and some time to familiarize themselves with its rules and mechanics. [if time allows - allow them to play the chosen game]

3. Media Literacy Brainstorming [if it wasn't done as a separate lesson/workshop] (20 minutes):
   - Introduce the concept of "re-theming" a game. [optional, based on the game design prowess of the group or time restrictions - learning by doing approach can also be effective]
   - Briefly discuss different types of media (e.g., news, social media, advertising).
   - Facilitate a group discussion on the importance of media literacy in understanding the messages various media formats convey.
   - Using handouts or projected examples, have participants brainstorm how the chosen media types can influence our perception of information.

4. Reimagine & Redesign (50 minutes - this timing: the more time you give, the better for the outcome):
   - Instruct, or just suggest, each group to choose a specific media type (e.g., news article, social media post) they would like to integrate into their game re-theme. [optional]
   - Challenge them to use the sample game mechanics as a foundation, but adapt the theme, components, and possibly even rules to incorporate their chosen element of Media Literacy.
   - Provide materials like markers, colouring pencils, gaming materials (i.e. dice) and scissors (if needed) for prototyping their game ideas on paper.

5. Game Presentations & Feedback (45 minutes - if time allows, allow teams to play test their creations giving feedback directly):
   - Invite each group to present their re-imagined game to the larger group, explaining their chosen media type, the media literacy aspects integrated into the gameplay, and any rule modifications they made.
   - Encourage constructive feedback from other groups, focusing on the effectiveness of the media literacy elements and the overall game experience.

6. Wrap-Up & Takeaways (10 minutes) [if not done as a separate workshop]:
   - Briefly summarize the key takeaways from the workshop: the importance of media literacy and its potential integration into game design.
   - Share additional resources for participants who want to learn more about media literacy or tabletop game design.
   - Thank participants for their contribution and creativity.

Important!: This is a flexible outline. Feel free to adjust it based on your audience, the chosen base game, and the desired level of detail for the re-imagined games.