GAMIFICATION IN 3RD SECTOR AND ESCAPE GAMES IN EDUCATION

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Gamify+: Enhancing Organizational Capacity through Hybrid Gaming

Games have long been used as educational tools. From the war games of Prussia to the modern-day educational apps, games have evolved to work with various learning styles and objectives.

Prussian War Games: During the XIXth century, Prussia employed war games as a means to train its military officers in strategic thinking and decision-making. These games simulated real-world battle scenarios, allowing participants to experiment with different tactics and learn from their mistakes in a controlled environment.

Landlord's Game: Created in 1902 by Lizzie Magie, Landlord's Game was a board game designed to teach players about economic concepts, such as land ownership, rent, and taxation. The game's popularity led to its adaptation and commercialization, eventually evolving into the iconic Monopoly game.

Contemporary Games in Education: In recent decades, the advent of digital technology has ushered in a new era of educational gaming. Games are now widely used in classrooms and beyond to enhance learning, engagement, and motivation. Contemporary games can be tailored to specific subjects, such as math, science, or history, and can incorporate various interactive elements, such as puzzles, challenges, and simulations. Also across sectors.
There are multiple games that already exist and were created for the benefit of the 3rd sector, the realm of social activity and interactions undertaken by non-governmental, not for profit organizations, educational and not only. They often aim to raise awareness, promote social change, or encourage participation in charitable endeavours.

Here are some examples:
- **FreeRice**: This online game allows players to answer trivia questions while helping to provide meals to people in need. [https://freerice.com/home]
- Various city-building games challenging players to create sustainable cities and address environmental issues. [https://ec.r2games.com/ - the most commercial; https://barlium.itch.io/eco-city-builder - the most 'serious'; https://mytopiagame.web.app/game - the quickest with directly served educational value]
- **Go Goals**: This game helps players, mainly children, learn about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and take action to achieve them [https://go-goals.org/].

As technology continues to advance, we can expect to see even more innovative and effective games that promote social change and make a positive impact on the world. Both offline and online, using digital tools and not, and of course hybrid designs.

On the other hand there's gamification, the application of game-like elements to non-game contexts. It has gained significant traction in recent years. While its beginnings can be traced back to early loyalty programs, older than a century, and incentive systems, the modern concept of gamification emerged in the late 2000s. Initially, gamification was primarily adopted by businesses to engage customers and drive sales. However, its potential to motivate and inspire individuals has led to its increasing use in the 3rd sector.

The 3rd sector, encompassing non-profit organizations, charities, and social enterprises, has embraced gamification as a means to address social challenges and promote positive change. Gamification has been used to encourage participation in volunteer activities, raise awareness about social issues, and foster community engagement. For example, gamified platforms have been developed to incentivize recycling, promote healthy behaviors, and encourage charitable giving. Those creating bridges between the 'real' and 'serious' world and the one of gaming.

Remember that 'not all students [people!] like all games, but all students like some games, if introduced properly and adjusted to their preferences and needs.' ['Learning and Teaching Chinese through Games' by Olle Linge, https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-chinese-through-games/]

MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION USING ESCAPE GAMES

The National Association for Media Literacy (USA) defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication." Nowadays, as the amount of information and the channels through which it reaches us are continually growing, it is crucial to focus on the skill of information analysis and the broader scope of knowledge, skills, and attitudes connected to media literacy. Beyond building up knowledge about the world of information, we, as educators, should provide space for practicing working with information and people. This is where escape games come into play.

What Are Escape Games?
Escape games, by their nature, involve processing new information, recalling existing knowledge, communicating in a stressful environment, and making decisions within a limited time. An escape game can feel overwhelming and frustrating, much like being bombarded with a vast amount of information designed to provoke action.

Escape rooms are team activities where a group of players is locked in one or several rooms and must work together to find clues, solve puzzles, and escape. The game usually lasts 60 minutes and can be played by groups of two to six people. Typically, a game master briefs the team, explains the rules and story, monitors the game process, provides extra hints when requested, and stops the game when time runs out.

All escape games have a theme reflected in the game story, the specific roles players assume, the physical setting, thematic puzzles, and the ultimate mission for players to fulfill. Common themes and missions include escaping a serial killer, unraveling a murder, defusing a bomb, preventing a global catastrophe, or escaping from a haunted hotel. There are also escape games set in the worlds of popular films or television series, such as Game of Thrones, Harry Potter, Nightmare on Elm Street, Mission Impossible, and many others.

Most escape games are provided by commercial escape game companies. However, puzzle-based games are increasingly being set up in libraries and museums, attracting more attention and interest from the wider public.

What Are Educational Escape Games?
There are many ways to distinguish an educational escape room from a commercial one. Key differences include that every educational game is designed with specific learning outcomes in mind from the start. The story may focus not on escaping but on understanding and solving a problem, unraveling a story, or helping a character. Puzzles and challenges in educational escape games can rely on prior knowledge that is expected from the target group. These games are more flexible, allowing for adjustments in game duration and team size. The goal is not necessarily for players to finish quickly, but to engage thoroughly with the story.

The game concludes with a debriefing or reflection process guided by an educator. An educational escape game can have alternative endings based on players' decisions. Lower budgets, higher mobility, and the importance of the story are often key characteristics of educational escape rooms.

Educational escape games can be used to introduce new material, review a topic, assess knowledge, evaluate soft skills, challenge views, and create motivation to dive deeper into the game's topic. Setting up a portable room in a tent in a park, creating one in the corner of a youth center, or using a classroom allows educators to bring fun and engagement to learning, which many youth workers and educators desire.

We value escape games for their ability to provide an immersive and emotional experience that remains memorable for a long time. Groups of players go through an embodied process of being active physically, mentally, and socially, making escape games a great opportunity for educational purposes.

If you would like to explore educational escape game scenarios or set up educational escape games for your group in real life. Then find a suitable print-2-play scenario at Playversity.co.

How to Prepare to Facilitate an Escape Game?

Before going into the field and using an escape game, we suggest doing a bit of preparation for yourself and notifying the group in advance also.

- Set up the game in advance and play it through. Check the material list and gather all materials hours before the game. Last-minute printer issues or missing simple materials are common, so prepare props in advance.
- Prepare extra copies of essential materials. Things tend to break, get misused, or go missing after a few plays, so have backups ready to fix any problems.
- Announce the game and make trigger warnings. It is good to be aware of any previous experiences that might affect players when choosing the theme of the game. For example, if the game is set around a heavy theme like domestic violence, it is important that it is announced beforehand and players are informed about the theme and possible triggers. This way you prepare the players and minimize the possibility of entering the panic zone while in-game. Always offer the option to opt out of playing.

What to Pay Attention to When Facilitating an Escape Game?

When facilitating escape games, you also take on the role of a game master. A game master facilitates the game session, opens up the new world for the players, leads them through the experience, and closes the world without leaving anyone stuck in the game, while bridging the lived experience with the real world and the lessons learned.
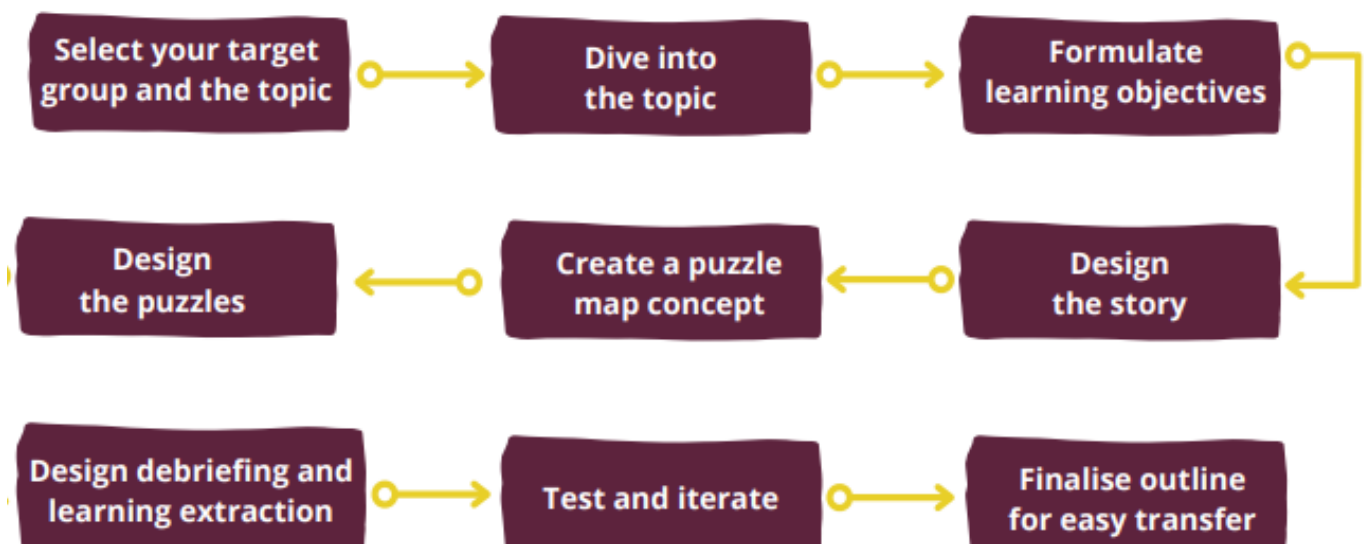
As a game master, you want to ensure the best possible experience for players. Educational escape games require strong facilitation skills, as game masters must introduce the game to the group, set the atmosphere, get players into their roles, provide hints when necessary, and support the group throughout the experience. When training game masters in Shokkin Group, we highlight the following:

- Introduce the rules and the story. Firstly, make the technical and rule briefing for the game. Then introduce the game story, explain what happened prior to the escape game scene, assign roles, provide necessary equipment (a diary, a phone, a tablet), and give time to study any specific information or media (website, newspaper article, video, or audio file). Inform players how to ask for support when needed. This way you pass all the necessary information in a structure manner and got the group equipped with everything they need to dive into the story.
- Set the atmosphere. Create an appropriate mood for the game when introducing the game or telling the intro story. If appropriate, use props to help players get into their roles. Encourage players to play thoughtfully.
- Don't intervene unless necessary. Playing through an educational game is an experience, and players have the right to navigate it themselves. Only intervene if rules are broken, preparation mistakes need correcting, unsafe situations occur, or players request a hint. If players seem to be struggling, you may ask if they would like a hint, but otherwise, observe and take notes for debriefing. That said, we still want the players to unravel the story in due time, so if you observe a team being sidetracked, ask a few questions that can hint towards re-evaluating their current ideas.

- De-role when necessary. For emotionally intense games, help players "shake off" their roles before debriefing. Simple physical activities or brief conversations about personal identities can help.

- Facilitate the debriefing. Debriefing is the most important part of the educational game experience. If time is short, work with a colleague who leads the debriefing or quickly gather initial reactions and connect them to real-world lessons. Provide follow-up materials, such as handouts, links to documentaries, or lectures, for further exploration.

How to Design an Escape Game?

Designing an educational escape room might seem like a rather difficult task. However, there is a systematic approach that allows the developer to make logical steps from thinking about the learners who will participate in playing all the way to planning how to extract concrete learning, iterate based on tests and make the escape room ready to be transferred into different contexts.

Select your target group and the topic → Dive into the topic → Formulate learning objectives → Design the story → Create a puzzle map concept → Design the puzzles → Design debriefing and learning extraction → Test and iterate → Finalise outline for easy transfer

If you want to learn about each step in greater detail and find templates for the design process, then take a look at chapter 4 of the [Breakout Box Manual](#).

Want to Learn More About Educational Escape Games?
If you want to hear more about the use of escape games in learning environments, you can listen to the [Gems of Youth Work podcast](#) with Pasquale Lanni or the [Talking Youth Work episode](#) with Gabi Steinprinz.

To design an educational escape game of your own or dive into more practices by international consortiums, take a look at the results of these international projects [Looking@Learning,](#) [Breakout Box](#) and [Gamifying Education](#).

A few suggestions of literature exploring escape games and puzzles in learning are [Unlocking the Potential of Puzzle-based Learning](#) by Scott Nicholson and Liz Cable and [Escape Rooms in Education: A Practical Guide](#) by Julia Morris.