Gamified Teaching Strategies to Work on Historical Thinking:
Methodological Applications

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The reality is that students show a lack of interest in certain school subjects. In Social Sciences, teaching has predominantly been based on transmission, which has only amplified the problem. It has also prevented new work and intervention techniques that boost students' interest in historical and geographical concepts from being developed. Including gamified didactic sequences to develop competences associated with historical thinking is one way in which this could change. In this chapter, the authors present a potential application of gamification, based on existing models such as the BIG 6 developed by Eisenberg and Berkowitz in 1990, which the authors link to the skills to be developed, the way in which information is presented, and the characteristics of the game or activity to be gamified. This model will help to promote didactic proposals that apply this work methodology in the future.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, general educational research and specific didactics have noted a problem that is a common occurrence in the classroom: a lack of motivation. This leads students to approach school activities with apathy and disinterest, thus negatively affecting learning and resulting in school failure (Solbes, 2007). Widespread opinions that define the "usefulness" of a student in society as the knowledge he/she can acquire and the numerical value of the grades he/she is able to obtain pose an additional obstacle (Gajardo, 1993). Combining these two aspects, we have a school context with certain dissonances, inconsistencies and problems with regard to fundamental questions: What should we teach? What do students want to learn? How can we tackle the fact that they do not want to learn? What strategies can we use to improve student learning?

These questions have formed the basis of reflection on school and learning since the beginnings of modern pedagogy. In fact, Ivan Illich already stated the following (cited in Carbonell, 2015):

"School is an institution built on the axiom that learning is the result of teaching. And institutional wisdom continues to accept this axiom, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. We have all learned most of what we know outside of school. Students do most of their learning without their teachers, and often despite their teachers." (Illich cited by Carbonell, 2015, p. 25).

There may be many reasons, apart from those inherent to the school institution itself, that lead to apathy, disinterest and finally school failure. These include socioeconomic difficulties, pedagogical reasons, psychological causes and family situations. These circumstances, although often not in the teacher's hands to change, represent an opportunity for us to transform teaching methods in order to obtain a different result than the one obtained at school (Bécares, Busto & de Hoyos, 2016). These new methodologies may involve implementing dynamic activities associated with play in educational practice or with widespread social matters such as the use of technological media, especially video games, for the teaching and learning of Geography and History. Using these new methodological resources, we can try to contribute to the learning of content, without forgetting the importance of subjecting this content to questioning or criticism, and while remembering where these resources or strategies can help.

In the current context, teachers are progressively moving away from their traditional role of "transmitter" of knowledge to instead become the driver of sessions, almost an "entertainer", in a world submerged with new teaching methodologies that perpetuate technical and moralizing models, rather than being based on critical paradigms (Colomer, Fuertes & Parra, 2022). Thus, the appearance of presumably new methodologies can help to improve teaching practice as long as they are associated with new educational practices. Within these methodologies, the concept of "gamification" has taken a prominent role. It is understood as the introduction of game-related characteristics (such as challenges, obstacles and tests to be solved) as an element in the development of a social or educational activity (Dicheva et al., 2015; McGonigal, 2013; Rodríguez & Santiago, 2015). The introduction of these dynamic activities is not new in the history of education, but their inclusion in specific subjects in an extensive way is. This includes, for example, the use of video games in the classroom to complete certain tasks, work on certain content or achieve certain competencies (Cuenca-López & Martín, 2010; Delgado-Algarra, 2022; Gros & Garrido-Miranda, 2008; Guevara & Colomer, 2017; Jiménez-Palacios & Cuenca-López, 2021; Mugueta, 2019; Rivero, 2017; Van der Schilden & Heijltjes, 2017).

Despite the emergence of these new gamified practices, few can be linked to the development of competencies in students related to the construction of historical thinking in the case of Social Sciences. This is understood as the way in which we represent the past thanks to our knowledge of it, which is understood as substantive or first-order content (dates, data, figures, concepts, etc.), but also use skills to give it meaning, in other words second-order content or historical meta-concepts. These skills, which give meaning to and help us understand the past as done in historical research, have been a fundamental reference framework in the field of Didactics of Social Sciences until very recently (Colomer, Sáiz, Morales, 2021; Éthier, Demers, & Lefrançois, 2010; Sáiz & Colomer, 2014).

Therefore, in this chapter we will present the concept of gamification and the relevant link with the construction of historical thinking. This will be based on different categories associated with this type of thinking, according to a model of information literacy (BIG 6). This will allow us to outline the

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