

Integrating Gamified Pedagogy to Enhance Social Enculturation and Acculturation Among Learners

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Abstract : In today's school context, with many different cultures and new technologies, students need to learn how to get along with people from different backgrounds and adapt to new cultures. This paper examines the function of Gamified Pedagogy as a novel instructional method to improve social enculturation and acculturation. Gamification, by incorporating game elements like points, badges, narratives, and collaboration, provides an engaging medium for social learning and cultural exchange. This descriptive study integrates existing literature on Gamified learning, Enculturation, and Acculturation, emphasizing the role of game-based environments in facilitating the acquisition of cultural norms, values, and adaptive behaviors. The paper also talks about the theoretical bases, teaching implications, and useful ways to use Gamification in schools. The results indicate that gamified pedagogy enhances learner motivation and promotes meaningful social interaction and cultural understanding, making it a powerful tool in multicultural education.

IndexTerms - Gamified pedagogy, Enculturation, Acculturation, Social learning, Multicultural Education

INTRODUCTION

The rapid change in today's society is driven by globalization, technology, and increased cultural movement. This shift has greatly altered the way we view education. Nowadays, classrooms are more multicultural, uniting students from various linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds. In such settings, education goes beyond just teaching academic subjects; it also involves building social skills, cultural awareness, and the ability to adapt, which are all vital for participating effectively in a diverse society. Two important processes that support this social and cultural aspect of learning are enculturation and acculturation. Enculturation is when people learn and adopt the values, norms, and practices of their native culture. Acculturation is about adapting to new or dominant cultures (Berry, 1997; Grusec & Hastings, 2015).

Traditional teaching methods, which often focus on memorization and personal achievement, may not fully address these intricate cultural processes. These approaches usually fail to recognize the importance of interaction, teamwork, and hands-on learning for encouraging social and cultural growth. As a result, students might find it hard to develop a sense of belonging, cultural identity, and the skills needed to communicate across cultures, especially in diverse educational environments. This challenge has led educators and researchers to look for new teaching strategies that can effectively blend cognitive, social, and cultural aspects of learning.

One effective method is gamified pedagogy, which involves using game design elements, such as points, badges, levels, leaderboards, challenges, and stories, to boost student engagement and motivation (Deterding et al., 2011; Kapp, 2012). Unlike traditional classroom settings, gamified learning is interactive and centred on the learner, promoting active participation and teamwork. These settings allow students to engage in meaningful social interactions, encounter different perspectives, and build knowledge through shared experiences, which aligns closely with social constructivism principles (Vygotsky, 1978).

Gamified pedagogy is especially useful for supporting enculturation and acculturation. With structured game mechanics and immersive stories, students are introduced to cultural norms, values, and practices in a fun and contextual way. For instance, role-playing and group challenges can mimic real-life social situations, helping students practice culturally appropriate behaviours and develop social skills. Additionally, gamified settings often promote teamwork and communication among students from various backgrounds, encouraging discussions and mutual understanding. These interactions are crucial for fostering acculturation, as they help individuals learn to navigate cultural differences and create adaptive strategies in a supportive environment (Berry, 1997).

Moreover, gamification supports important motivation theories, especially Self-Determination Theory, which highlights the significance of autonomy, competence, and connection in nurturing intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). By offering immediate feedback, clear objectives, and chances for collaboration, gamified learning environments meet these psychological needs, thus increasing engagement and participation. This higher level of engagement not only boosts academic success but also enhances social integration and cultural learning, making gamification a well-rounded approach to education. Even with its rising popularity, the use of gamified pedagogy for cultural learning is still largely unexplored, especially regarding enculturation and acculturation.

Most current research focuses on its effects on motivation and academic results, with little emphasis on its potential to enhance social and cultural skills. Thus, it's essential to develop a deeper understanding of how gamified pedagogy can be effectively woven into teaching practices to aid these processes. In this context, this paper aims to examine the role of gamified pedagogy in strengthening social enculturation and acculturation among students. By bringing together theoretical viewpoints and existing studies, the research intends to shed light on how gamification can foster inclusive, interactive, and culturally responsive learning environments. It also

seeks to guide educators and policymakers on how to design and implement gamified strategies that not only support cognitive growth but also promote social unity and cultural flexibility in diverse educational settings.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Gamified Pedagogy

Gamified pedagogy means incorporating game features like points, badges, levels, challenges, and storytelling into teaching to boost student engagement and motivation. It changes traditional teaching into an interactive and enjoyable experience, encouraging active involvement and instant feedback, which aids understanding and retention (Deterding et al., 2011). This approach also nurtures problem-solving skills, teamwork, and intrinsic motivation among students (Hamari et al., 2014). Gamified pedagogy supports the goals of the National Education Policy 2020, which focuses on experiential, competency-based, and enjoyable learning (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, its success relies on thoughtful design to make sure that learning remains significant rather than overly fixated on rewards or competition. Overall, gamification makes education more lively, student-centred, and effective.

2.2 Social Enculturation

Social enculturation involves how people learn and absorb the values, norms, beliefs, language, and behaviours of their culture through ongoing interactions with family, friends, schools, and society. It starts in early childhood and continues throughout life, influencing identity, attitudes, and social behaviour (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). Through enculturation, individuals develop a sense of belonging and understand culturally appropriate ways of thinking and acting (Matsumoto & Juang, 2017). Schools play a key role in passing on cultural knowledge and social values. This idea supports the goals of the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes culturally rooted, value-based, and holistic education (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, excessive conformity can hinder critical thinking if cultural norms are accepted without reflection.

2.3 Social Acculturation

Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place when people or groups regularly interact with a different culture and start to adopt some of its values, norms, and practices, while possibly keeping elements of their original culture. This often happens through migration, globalization, or intercultural exchanges, resulting in changes in language, behaviour, identity, and social relationships (Berry, 1997). Acculturation can manifest in various ways, including assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization; the outcome depends on how individuals balance the two cultures (Berry, 2005). Educational environments are crucial in supporting healthy acculturation by encouraging inclusion and cultural understanding. This idea is in line with the goals of the National Education Policy 2020, which stresses respecting cultural diversity and inclusion (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, if not properly supported, acculturation can lead to cultural conflict or distress over identity.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

3.1 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a learning theory that suggests knowledge is built through social interactions and collaborations rather than being passed directly from teacher to student. It highlights that learning occurs when individuals engage in discussions, shared activities, and cultural practices within a social context (Lev Vygotsky, 1978). From this viewpoint, language, culture, and interaction with more knowledgeable individuals are key to cognitive growth, especially through concepts like the Zone of Proximal Development. Students construct meaning by linking new information to previous experiences in a collaborative setting (Fosnot, 2013). In education, this theory promotes group work, discussions, and guided strategies. It aligns with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes experiential, participatory, and learner-centred teaching (Ministry of Education, 2020).

3.2 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation that explains how individuals become self-motivated and engaged in activities based on fulfilling three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, SDT emphasizes that intrinsic motivation, doing an activity for its own sake, leads to deeper learning and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When students feel free in their choices, capable in their skills, and connected to others, they are more likely to be motivated and succeed (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In schools, SDT promotes learner-centred methods, active involvement, and supportive relationships between teachers and students. This aligns with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020, which advocates for holistic development, student agency, and joyful learning (Ministry of Education, 2020).

3.3 Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) explains that learning is a process where knowledge is created through changing experiences. Introduced by David A. Kolb, it focuses on a cyclical learning model that includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Students actively engage with experiences, reflect on them, form concepts, and apply these insights in new situations, leading to deeper understanding and skill development. ELT stresses the importance of hands-on activities, real-life contexts, and reflection in education. Teachers implement it through projects, fieldwork, simulations, and problem-based learning. This approach aligns with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020, which supports experiential, competency-based, and holistic learning (Ministry of Education, 2020).

GAMIFIED PEDAGOGY AND SOCIAL ENCULTURATION

Gamified pedagogy has a significant impact on enhancing social enculturation by incorporating cultural norms, values, and social practices into engaging learning environments. Enculturation, where individuals absorb cultural beliefs and behaviours, becomes more meaningful when paired with game-based elements that provide hands-on learning opportunities (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). By including rules, stories, and teamwork, gamified pedagogy allows learners to practice cultural expectations in an interactive setting.

4.1 Learning Cultural Norms through Game Mechanics

Game mechanics like rules, roles, rewards, and feedback systems often reflect societal structures. Participating in these environments helps learners internalize behavioural expectations, discipline, and responsibility through reinforcement and active engagement (Deterding et al., 2011). Learners also develop cooperation, fairness, and ethical awareness as they engage in structured gameplay (Hamari et al., 2014). These processes mirror real-life socialization and contribute to enculturation.

4.2 Role of Narratives and Storytelling

Narratives in gamified learning include cultural symbols, traditions, and values, making learning more contextual and meaningful. Storytelling increases emotional engagement and helps learners connect with cultural content, fostering empathy and identity formation (Matsumoto & Juang, 2017). This type of learning aligns with the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes culturally rooted and value-based education (Ministry of Education, 2020).

4.3 Peer Interaction and Socialization

Gamified environments encourage collaboration through group challenges and team-based activities. These interactions promote communication, cooperation, and a sense of belonging, all crucial for enculturation (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). This also reflects the principles of social constructivism proposed by Lev Vygotsky, where learning happens through social interaction and shared experiences (Vygotsky, 1978).

GAMIFIED PEDAGOGY AND ACCULTURATION

Gamified pedagogy significantly supports acculturation by creating safe, interactive, and engaging environments where learners can encounter and adapt to diverse cultural contexts. Acculturation involves adjusting to a new culture while negotiating one's original cultural identity. Gamified learning facilitates this process through immersive and participatory experiences (Berry, 1997). By integrating diverse perspectives, low-risk experimentation, and collaborative activities, gamification helps learners navigate cultural differences meaningfully.

5.1 Exposure to Diverse Perspectives

Gamified learning environments often involve diverse characters, global scenarios, and culturally rich narratives. This exposure enables learners to understand various cultural viewpoints and appreciate differences in beliefs, values, and practices (Matsumoto & Juang, 2017). Engaging with varied perspectives helps learners develop empathy and tolerance, which are essential for intercultural competence. Additionally, encountering diversity in a structured and engaging format reduces stereotypes and cultural biases, as learners actively interact with rather than passively observe different cultures (Hamari et al., 2014).

5.2 Safe Environment for Cultural Adaptation

One key advantage of gamified pedagogy is that it provides a safe and low-risk environment for learners to experiment with new cultural behaviours and identities. In games, mistakes are part of the learning process, allowing learners to try new forms of communication and interaction without fear of real-world consequences. This is especially beneficial for students adapting to new cultural settings, such as migrants or learners in multicultural classrooms (Berry, 2005). Through repeated engagement, learners gradually build confidence and competence in navigating unfamiliar cultural norms.

5.3 Collaborative Learning Across Cultures

Gamified pedagogy often includes multiplayer and team-based activities that bring together learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. These collaborative experiences encourage intercultural communication, mutual respect, and shared understanding. Learners engage in dialogue, negotiate meanings, and work toward common goals, which improves their ability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings (Vygotsky, 1978). Such interactions reflect the principles of social constructivism and contribute to developing global citizenship skills. Furthermore, this approach aligns with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes inclusivity, cultural diversity, and building socially responsible individuals (Ministry of Education, 2020). By promoting collaboration across cultures, gamified pedagogy prepares learners for participation in an increasingly connected world.

INTEGRATING GAMIFIED PEDAGOGY IN THE CLASSROOM TO ENHANCE SOCIAL ENCULTURATION AND ACCULTURATION

Gamified pedagogy can be effectively integrated into classroom practices to promote social enculturation and acculturation among learners. By designing structured, culturally responsive, and interactive learning environments, teachers can help students internalize their own cultural values while appreciating diverse cultural contexts. This approach aligns with learner-centred and hands-on principles emphasized in the National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020).

6.1 Designing Culturally Responsive Game Mechanics

Teachers can create game elements such as points, badges, and levels that reflect cultural values like cooperation, respect, and responsibility. For instance, rewards can be given for teamwork, ethical behaviour, and inclusive participation rather than merely individual achievements. Such mechanics help learners internalize societal norms and values, supporting enculturation (Deterding et al., 2011). At the same time, including diverse cultural elements in game rules and roles allows learners to experience and appreciate various cultural perspectives, aiding acculturation (Berry, 2005).

6.2 Use of Culturally Rich Narratives and Scenarios

Gamified lessons can include stories, case studies, or role-playing scenarios based on local traditions as well as global cultural contexts. For example, a history or language lesson can be designed as a quest involving folk tales, festivals, or intercultural exchanges. This strengthens learners' connection with their culture while exposing them to others, promoting empathy and cultural understanding (Matsumoto & Juang, 2017). Story-based gamification increases emotional engagement, deepening both enculturation and acculturation processes.

6.3 Collaborative and Multicultural Learning Activities

Group-based challenges, peer competitions, and cooperative missions can be used to bring students from diverse backgrounds together. These activities encourage communication, negotiation, and shared problem-solving, reflecting the principles of social constructivism proposed by Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978). Through such interactions, learners develop social skills, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for both enculturation and acculturation.

6.4 Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment

Gamified classrooms offer a low-risk environment where learners can explore new roles, identities, and cultural behaviours without fear of failure. Teachers can create inclusive spaces where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, helping students adjust to new cultural settings with confidence (Berry, 1997). This is especially beneficial in multicultural classrooms, where students may navigate multiple cultural identities.

6.5 Continuous Feedback and Reflection

Incorporating feedback systems such as tracking progress, reflection journals, and peer evaluation helps learners become aware of their cultural learning and social behaviour. Reflection activities encourage students to think critically about their experiences, values, and interactions, strengthening both cultural identity and intercultural competence (Kolb, 1984). Integrating gamified pedagogy in the classroom provides a powerful way to enhance both social enculturation and acculturation. Through culturally responsive game mechanics, meaningful narratives, collaborative learning, and reflective practices, educators can create engaging environments that support overall development. This helps learners internalize their cultural values and prepares them to adapt and thrive in diverse cultural contexts.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF GAMIFIED PEDAGOGY IN ENHANCING ENCULTURATION AND ACCULTURATION

While gamified pedagogy holds significant potential for promoting social enculturation and acculturation, its implementation in classrooms faces challenges. These limitations must be closely examined to ensure meaningful and effective use in educational contexts.

7.1 Superficial Engagement vs. Deep Learning

One major challenge is that gamification may sometimes emphasize rewards, points, and competition more than meaningful learning. Learners may become motivated by external rewards, prioritizing them over genuine understanding, which can hinder deep cultural learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This reduces the effectiveness of both enculturation and acculturation processes.

7.2 Over Competition and Social Pressure

Leaderboards and competitive elements can create stress, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy among some learners. Rather than encouraging collaboration and belonging, excessive competition may lead to exclusion or decreased participation, negatively affecting socialization and cultural integration (Hamari et al., 2014).

7.3 Cultural Bias in Game Design

Gamified content may unintentionally reflect dominant cultural perspectives while overlooking minority or local cultures. This can limit inclusivity and hinder acculturation by reinforcing stereotypes or creating cultural imbalances (Matsumoto & Juang, 2017). Therefore, culturally responsive design is essential.

7.4 Digital Divide and Resource Constraints

Effective gamification often needs digital tools, infrastructure, and teacher training. In many educational settings, especially in developing regions, a lack of access to technology and resources can limit its implementation, creating inequality in learning opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2020).

7.5 Teacher Preparedness and Pedagogical Design

Gamified pedagogy requires careful planning, creativity, and understanding of subject matter and learner diversity. Teachers may find it challenging to create meaningful gamified experiences or align them with curricular goals. Without proper training, gamification may be ineffective or misused (Deterding et al., 2011).

7.6 Risk of Oversimplification of Culture

Representing culture through games and narratives may sometimes oversimplify complex cultural realities. This can result in shallow understanding or misinterpretation of cultural values, limiting the depth of enculturation and acculturation processes (Berry, 2005).

CONCLUSION

This paper explored the potential of gamified pedagogy as an innovative and holistic approach to enhancing both social enculturation and acculturation among learners in culturally diverse educational settings. Drawing on theoretical perspectives such as social constructivism, Self-Determination Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory, the study highlighted how gamified environments encourage active engagement, collaboration, and meaningful cultural learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kolb, 1984). By integrating game mechanics, narratives, and interactive activities, gamified pedagogy enables learners to internalize cultural norms and values while developing the ability to adapt to new cultural contexts (Deterding et al., 2011; Berry, 1997). The analysis showed that gamification helps students become part of a culture through social interactions and experiences that are rooted in that culture. It also aids in the process of learning from different cultures by giving learners access to various viewpoints and encouraging discussions between cultures.

However, the study found several challenges, such as shallow engagement, cultural bias, and limited resources, which need to be tackled through careful and inclusive teaching design. In line with the goals of the National Education Policy 2020, using gamified teaching methods presents a good way to create classrooms that focus on students, are inclusive, and respond to cultural needs. Overall, it has great potential to prepare students to be socially skilled, culturally aware, and flexible individuals who can succeed in a world that is becoming more connected.

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