Master of Arts en enseignement pour le degré secondaire I

Synthèse du Mémoire de Master

Playing for Detention.

The ludicization of classroom management: A case study of its application by teachers to its effects on students' rule *appropriation.*

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Introduction

A teacher's primary role in the classroom is the transference of knowledge to the students yet this act can be challenging when faced with disruptive behaviour and students who do not respect the classroom rules. Classroom management, which is dealing with discipline whilst creating an ideal learning environment without disruptions, is a daily obstacle for many teachers.

Research on classroom management by McCaslin and Good pointed out that classroom management has often been considered to be the act of controlling the students and punishing disruptive behaviour (1998, p. 169). Today, this view is outdated and classroom management has become more about creating an ideal learning environment, developing social and emotional relationships, and maintaining an appropriate classroom behaviour.

Classroom management, or more specifically behaviour management, presents itself as one of the main challenges and obstacles a teacher faces during their career. Disruptive behaviour is essentially students who do not follow the rules of conduct within the classroom. The problem lies in

the students' lack of acceptance, understanding, and respect towards the classroom rules. The difficulty is therefore in teaching these rules of conduct and getting the students to maintain appropriate behaviour in the classroom. For the students to follow the rules, the rules must be understood and internalised. This view was advocated by McCaslin and Good (1998, p. 170) as they identified three discipline goals: *compliance*, *identification*, and *internalization*. In other words, teachers need to guide students towards the *appropriation* of the classroom rules.

In order to achieve this, teachers must discover alternative and innovative approaches to motivate students to improve and internalise desired behaviours. One approach that has been used in different ways is to adapt classroom management into a ludic experience. Psychologist Brian Sutton-Smith (1997) believes that when a person is participating in a game, they attain a state of mind that encourages cognitive and social growth. Games can therefore allow teachers to create an environment where students can develop their social skills as well as appropriate rules on how to behave in the classroom. This work shall base itself within the context of an online web-based platform called *Classcraft* which is a tool for teachers to transform classroom management into a ludic experience.

This act of transforming a non-ludic experience into a game has become ever more popularised over the past decade and is globally known as *gamification*. This phenomenon refers to the transformation of a non-ludic artefact into a game through the use of game mechanics and the *Classcraft* team have used this term to describe their platform (Sanchez et al., 2017, p. 498). An alternative term has been offered by French academics to remove the focus from the game artefact and focus more upon the act of playing, this term is *ludicization*. This term considers that a situation becomes ludic when there are players to engage within it, therefore without a playful attitude the game cannot occur (Genvo, 2013). Subsequently, if a teacher was to use this ludic platform to guide the students towards appropriating the classroom rules and appropriate behaviour, then the students will need to engage in the game and take on an attitude that shall allow for what Sutton-Smith considered to be an ideal state of mind for there to be cognitive and social growth.

The overall objective of this work is to evaluate whether *ludicization* can be a useful tool in developing social skills and appropriate classroom behaviour. Therefore, to be able to fulfil this objective this study shall develop a greater understanding of what classroom management is and what theories exist at this moment in time relating to altering student behaviour. The concept of appropriating classroom rules as well as a means of measuring such a phenomenon is also assessed. Finally, it offers a look into the concept of *ludicization* along with the benefits of games as teaching tools. All of these elements will be developed in the theoretical framework of this study and shall demonstrate a progression from the theory to the methodology of this work.

One of the main objectives of this work was to implement the use of the game *Classcraft* into

a local secondary school class and to develop a research collaboration between a group of teachers and the research team. Once the pilot class was set up, the research objectives were to determine a set of classroom rules to be ludicized, to observe the use of *ludicization* within a secondary school classroom, to record any changes in classroom behaviour across the duration of the game, and to measure the level of rule *appropriation* achieved by the students using a predetermined model of measurement.

Method

In order to achieve the research objectives set out in this work a mixed methodology was selected, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. All of the data that was used was taken from a single pilot class that was set up for the purpose of this study.

The study was carried out within a secondary school in the Canton of Fribourg, Switzerland. The class in question was an eleventh-year secondary school class (final year of compulsory education) within the prégymnasiale level (PG). The class was made up of 22 students comprising of 11 males and 11 females, and the age of the students varied between 14 and 16 years of age.

Throughout a twenty-nine-week period, the research team carried out observations of the pilot class in lessons using *Classcraft*. In addition to these observations, the research team had special academic authorisation to collate and export all digital data which covered every action performed on the *Classcraft* platform. The digital data collected during this experiment represents every in-game interaction, from activating a rule for disobedience to the purchase of a power. This data was transferred into an Excel spreadsheet from where it could be filtered to identify pertinent information. This allowed an understanding of how the rules were interpreted by the teachers and how they used the platform as well as to determine whether any students displayed any changes in their behaviour during the game experience.

As well as these observations and the digital data, further data was collected from the meetings between the teachers, a questionnaire and a series of interviews with the students. These research tools were developed to measure the level of rule *appropriation* by the students. This work adapted a model to measure *appropriation* that was developed by Celso Gonçalves (Gonçalves, 2013, p. 79). In his model he identified five key levels of behaviour to demonstrate *appropriation*: *Accept*, *Test*, *Make choices*, *Anticipate*, and *Mastery*. These five levels were reduced to three for this research on rule *appropriation*: *Explore*, *Elaborate strategies*, and *Mastery*.

This work developed three main research questions: to understand the rules that had been interpreted into the game, whether the students showed signs of improving their behaviour, and finally whether the students had appropriated the teachers' rules. A decision was made to select only three profile types from the class rather than to analyse every students' level of *appropriation*. The three

profiles selected each represented different approaches in their classroom behaviour as well as their in game experiences.

Results

This work aims to understand the effects of the *ludicization* of classroom management on students' *appropriation* of classroom rules. The results revealed the means by which the teachers set up the game and in what way during the seven month period they used this set up. Secondly, the digital data collected through the platform presented the pilot class as a whole, each of the four *Classcraft* teams, and each individual student. This was followed by a presentation of the results obtained from both the questionnaire and the debriefing/interviews. Finally, three students were selected who represented different profiles of appropriation. In order to develop these three profiles the game data, answers to the questionnare and their participation in the interviews and debriefing were analysed.

The results demonstrated that the students appropriated the rules in different ways throughout the game. Some students placed more importance on the reward system in the game rather than following the rules. Others used the game to avoid following the rules at all. Some students followed the rules but did not take advantage of the rewards the game had to offer. The difficult task in ludicizing classroom management, is to achieve the right balance between punishment and reward. The teachers in this pilot class focused on the academics and not on developing an appropriate behaviour in class. The result of the pilot class shows that the students benefited from a lack of consistency in approach by the teachers. The students believed they had the upper hand at the end of the experience by showing they could break rules at school with little or no consequences. The way the rules were set up in some ways removed the importance of the rules themselves. For these students losing health points in the game was not negative feedback, it was instead a way to hide their mistakes from their parents. That said, some students still came away mastering the teachers' rules as well as the game and got more from the game than others. Of the three profiles chosen, two students achieved the second level of the *appropriation* of the rules, whilst one showed behaviour of obtaining the third and highest level.

When adapting the classroom environment as a ludic experience, it is important to have a clear structure and objectives from the start. In this experiment, the teachers lacked consistency in the way they used the platform and therefore certain rules were lost in the experience. The students found it too easy to manipulate the game in their favour. Consequently, there is no observable progression in respecting the rules, more the opposite, whereby the rules lost importance during the process. However, to manipulate the rules in one's favour, the students demonstrated they understood them and appropriated them in the sense of making them their own. As a result of adopting strategies that

turned the game around, they did not need to fear losing in the game. The process of *ludicization* offers interesting dynamics towards classroom management. The initial setup and objectives were not followed through and certain choices in the game's rules removed the sense of danger from it. To have a good game, you need to feel as if you can win or lose at any moment, when it is too easy the players will lose interest or take advantage of the situation. The data supports this interpretation.

Conclusion

The overall findings, based on the results obtained, were inconclusive for several reasons. The first was down to the lack of engagement into creating a ludicized situation by the teachers. There was little to no communication between the teachers who shared the game experience and an incoherent approach. The second was due to the teachers not fully committing to using their rules, especially the rules that rewarded positive behaviour. For a game to be considered fun and motivating, there needs to be a sensation of knowing that it is possible to win. This aspect was not fully utilised and therefore the creation of a ludic environment was not achieved. That said, the game and experiment still took place, and the students participated. Therefore, the overall objective, namely the setting up a pilot class and observing the use of *ludicization*, was achieved in this work. This study concludes that in order for a game to reach its full development the master of the game should be committed and well informed of the artefact in use. In hindsight, it would have been pertinent to set out the teachers' expectations of using the platform *a priori* and use these expectations to develop what behavioural changes could be expected.

Another primary objective was to determine a set of rules to be ludicized. This objective was adapted into a research question that sought to present the contextualisation of the rules by the teachers. Although a set of rules were contextualised, the findings indicate that they were not necessarily used. Furthermore, one of the rules that had no clear definition was one of the most frequently used rules; therefore, the teachers were happy to punish without giving clear feedback. The rules were determined and contextualised, and the rules to punish negative classroom behaviours were mostly clear and easy to understand. However, when it came to rewarding positive behaviours the teachers failed in their contextualisation and *ludicization* of the rules. The general consensus was that they should not reward students for behaving well in class, as this was perceived as pointless. The rules were determined and contextualised and partially ludicized, yet the potential benefit of *ludicization* was lost in the absence of rewards to behave appropriately.

Another objective of this work was to understand whether the students demonstrated any changes in classroom behaviour whilst interacting through a ludicized situation. This was rephrased into the second research question where the findings demonstrated that the only clear change in classroom behaviour for the whole class was the increase of collaboration. Both discipline and

participation were less acknowledged to have changed during the process and again the way the platform was used would have had a huge influence on these outcomes. The effect of research parameters changing across the seven-month experiment also had an impact on the findings.

This research also sought to measure *appropriation*. This was done by looking in detail at three students. *Appropriation* is a personal occurrence, as it is largely about making something one's own. Therefore, it is an ambitious task to observe this for every participant. Of the three selected students, each displayed characteristics of multiple levels of *appropriation*. It can therefore be concluded that *appropriation* was achieved in the context of ludicized classroom management. The level of *appropriation* depends on each student, but what is interesting is that *ludicization* does offer many advantages in motivating the students to interact differently in the classroom. The data showed that the majority of the class engaged in the game.

In conclusion, *appropriation* is clearly evident throughout the experiment. Although the teachers missed many opportunities to create a fully ludic approach to classroom management, the findings show that students still managed to benefit from the game. The general consensus of the class was that they were getting more from the platform than the teachers. The motivation on the side of the students was clearly visible and the lusory attitude was quickly taken on by the majority. The challenges remained in the conception of the game and the coherent use of the platform, similar to classroom management at the beginning of the year. To fully understand the benefits of the *ludicization* of classroom management in bringing about the internalisation of social behaviour, the results are mixed, but the potential is there for future research to take this particular element of *ludicization* further.

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