

How can we educate social workers on the use of online media?

Overview

Social workers need to delve into the world of the youth and go in their safe space, to get the most genuine view of the current-day youth. But since most social workers have trouble with being online and using the latest trends within the landscape of online media, research needs to be done into how online media can easily be learned by social workers. Educating social workers on these matters is already important for the aforementioned reasons, but especially because of online threats. Social workers need to be able to counter online threats and teach the youth how they could be safe as well.

Unfortunately, the online media is constantly changing. For example, Snapchat could be the big thing among youth, but a couple of years later, suddenly TikTok and the new Instagram came into the mix and the Snapchat-hype died out slowly. These big changes can come within just a couple of years, or even months. That is why it is important that the education of social platforms should be done with the future in mind. This way, if something changes in the social media landscape, it will not have a massive impact on the knowledge of online media among social workers.

Methods

The methods that will be used during this research are Co-creation and Co-reflection. The most important thing is that the education actually aligns with what social workers want and need. Because of this, Co-creation and Co-reflection was chosen. By checking in with social workers, experts of media design and other people who aren't good with online media, a better view of the methods which should be used for teaching can be formed. A bit of literature study will also be done, since teaching methods need to be applied and literature can help with finding teaching methods and ways to apply these.

Gamification

Search terms: Gamification in Education, Gamification, Education by Gamification, Examples of Gamification

Games are a big part of many people's lives. They have taken the world by storm ever since they came out and now games are also used as methods to teach and motivate people. Combining elements from games and education can have a big

positive impact on the quality of the learning process (Blankman, 2022). Gamification emphasizes behavior like collaboration, self-study and creativity (Caponetto, I., Earp, J., Ott, M. as cited by Busch, C., 2014, p. 50-57). Especially the self-study part of this is very important with the fast changing landscape of online media. This is because the youth will switch from platform to platform, depending on what's new and what is the current trend.

An example of good gamification while learning something is Duolingo. Duolingo already had 500 million users in 2021 and today remains one of the biggest platforms to learn languages (Bilham, 2021). Bilham also states that Duolingo used Yu-Kai Chou's octalysis framework for their gamification. This framework shows the eight fundamentals of gamification that motivate people to learn. In the case of Duolingo, this worked amazingly.

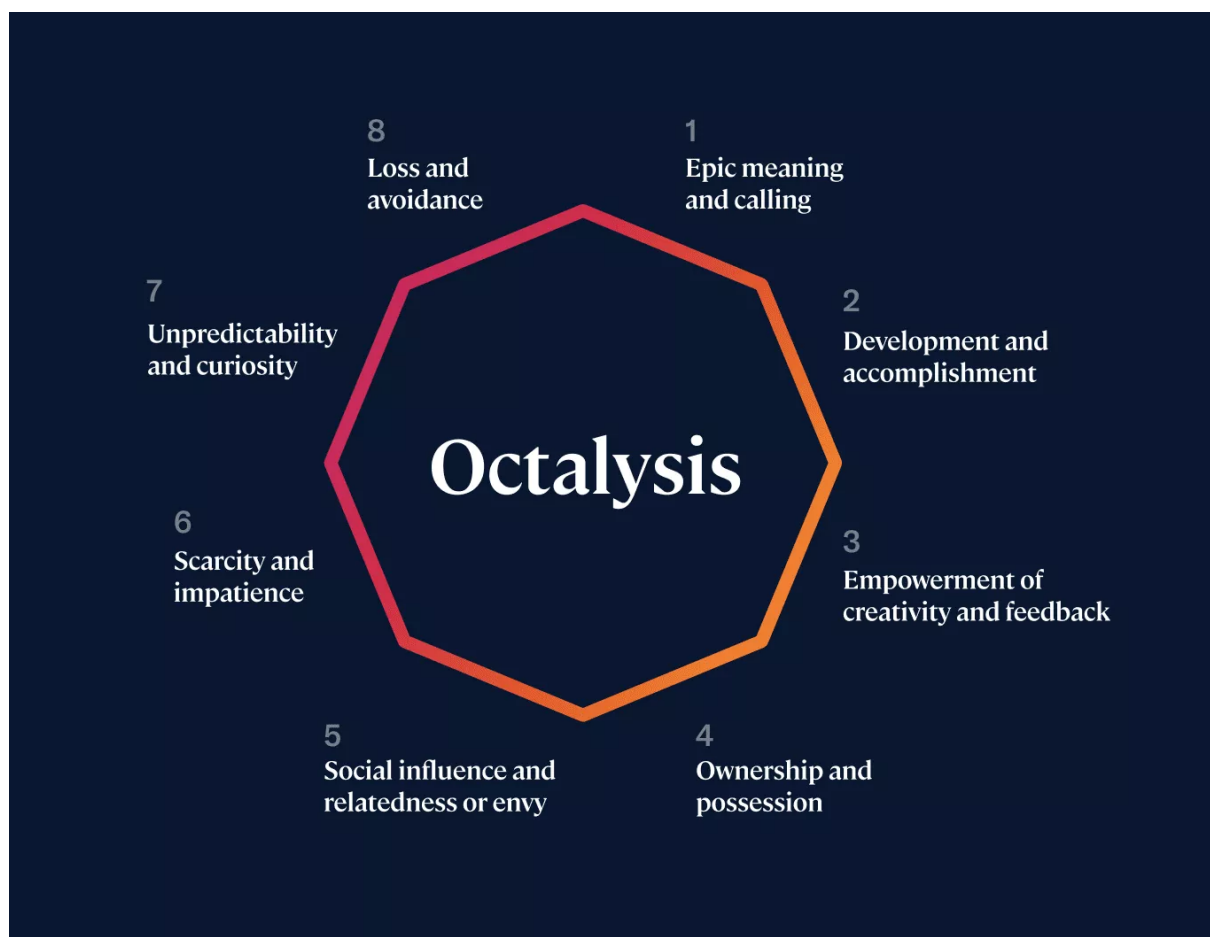


Figure 1: The octalysis framework as defined by Yu-Kai Chou.

The octalysis framework works as following:

There are 8 cornerstones of successful gamification. If you miss one of these, less motivation will be created when playing the game. On the left side of the octagon, you see that the line is red. This means that these are the elements that players try to avoid. A player, for example, would not like losing or becoming envious of others, however, for motivation, having these consequences for not playing the game right or not practicing. The orange side is the side the player wants to achieve, the winning/fun side.

The cornerstones means the following:

1. Epic meaning and calling - The player needs to feel like they are chosen for this task. When educating social workers, they need to know that they specifically are the chosen people to learn social media.
2. Development and accomplishment - The player needs to be rewarded when doing something well. They need to get acknowledged that they are doing things right. But players also need to see that they are close to achieving certain goals.
3. Empowerment of creativity and feedback - The player needs to get feedback if they are doing something wrong. However, the player also wants to be able to experiment and make choices, so they can also be a bit creative.
4. Ownership and possession - You own your profile and you want to see a good and positive profile. So the player needs to be able to see how they have been doing and they need to be able to show others what kind of improvements they made.
5. Social influence and relatedness or envy - The player wants to see how their friends or colleagues are doing. Following friends and colleagues and comparing profiles is something that can build up satisfaction or even envy and both will lead to more motivation.
6. Scarcity and impatience - People in general want to get things easily, but with good gamification they need to work for it. Not too much, not too little. With events to faster get rewards they get a motivation boost. But also things that are hard to obtain, things that are scarce. Players will want to get the scarce things, even if they have to work hard for it.
7. Unpredictability and curiosity - Players want to know what is happening next. For example they want to know what the next course is going to be or what happens when you get everything right for a specific lesson. And if they find out these small unpredictable things, it gives a motivation boost to seek out more of these things.
8. Loss and avoidance - The feeling of losing. Like Duolingo's streak system, players who don't play for a day lose their streak they worked so hard on to get. This breeds a fear of losing not only the game, but also something you worked on and this keeps you motivated to continue.

Our product must have gamification to make it a motivating platform, as seen in the octalysis framework. Motivation increases results (Mos, 2020). This can both be intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. By making winning rewarding and losing not-rewarding or even slightly punishing, people will get motivated to do everything right. And this is the best way to teach social workers online media.

Teaching Methods

Search terms: Learning Pit, Self-Determination Ryan & Deci, Vygotsky Cirkel, Forget Curve

The Learning Pit

The learning pit is a principle that visualizes a good learning process (Nottingham, n.d.). It shows that you need to be faced with a challenge that is insurmountable by yourself, but is very much surmountable when you've got guidance. By looking into this learning process, you find out what things to look out for when making the teaching material. The following image of the learning pit shows how the learning process should be.

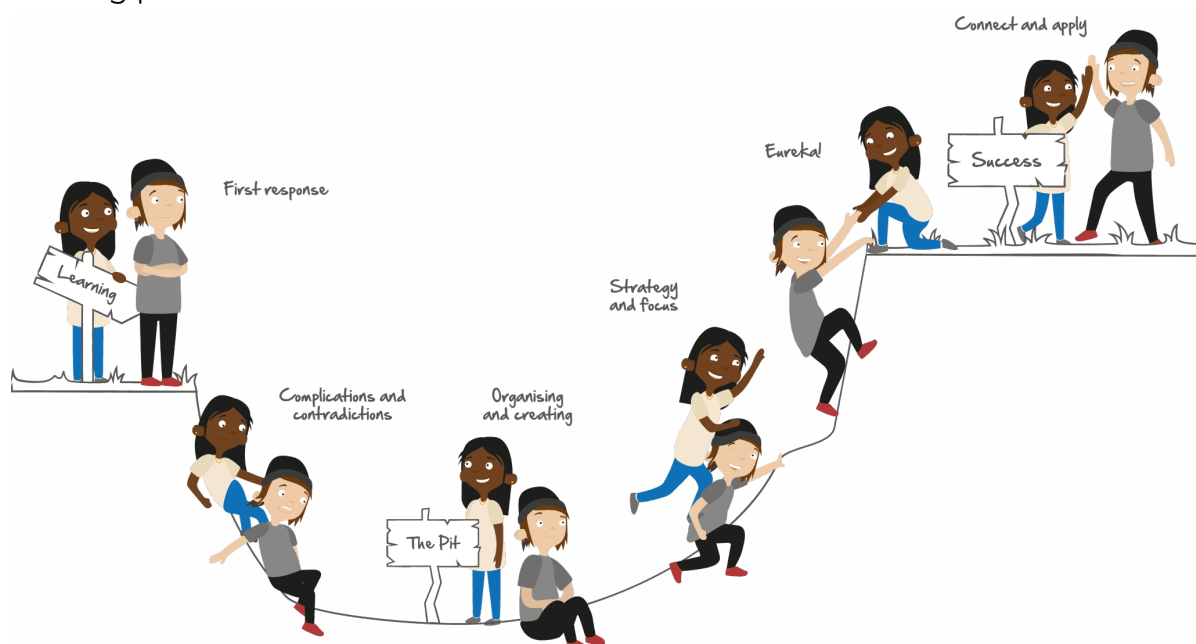


Figure 2: The Learning Pit by James Nottingham

When you are faced with a problem, in this case learning social media (Step 1), you give your initial reaction, but then you slide in the pit and realize the learning process will be tougher than thought. It comes with complications and contradictions (step 2). At step 3, the learner is looking for multiple solutions to find the best way to overcome the problem. And in step 4, the hard part begins, the student will make a strategy and throw themselves against the problem to surmount it. But as seen in the image, they help each other and they are not thrown in the deep without help. Finally, the last step is the elation when you solve a problem.

In short, to really motivate social workers to learn how online media work, we need to throw them in the deep, but give guidance and help where social workers need this. But they need to get the feeling that they solve their problem because they learned something. Guidance should not be given too much. This is definitely something to keep in mind.

Self-Determination

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci & Ryan is a theory that shows how to motivate your students by letting them get intrinsic motivation (Center for Self-Determination Theory, n.d.). The three key components for this theory are **autonomy, competence, and relatedness**. Autonomy in this context means that students feel like they have a choice to learn and are not completely forced to do so. Competence means that students feel like they are learning something. The fact that they get closer to their goal and feel like they mastered everything they have learned. Lastly, relatedness means that students feel connected to others and they also need to feel like what they learn is important to what they want to achieve. For example, if they learn about how to use online media, students will not get motivated by teaching them media history.

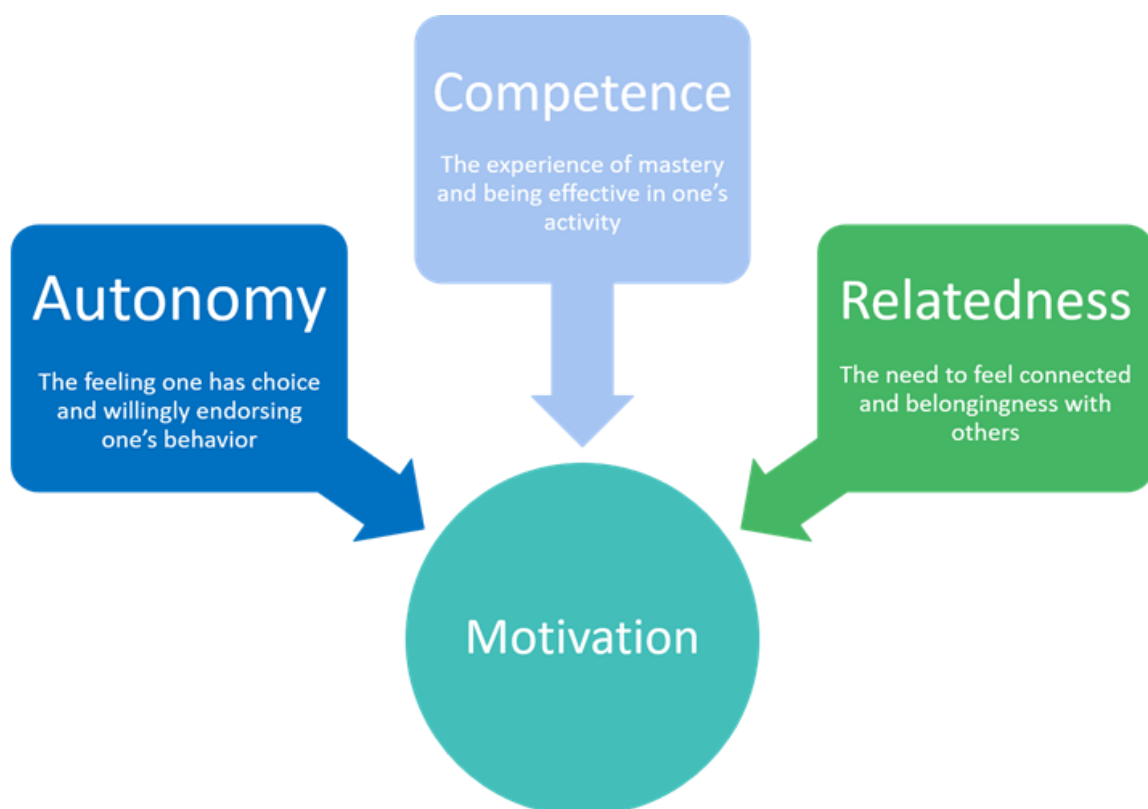


Figure 3: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan and Deci

With these three elements from the Self-Determination Theory, the social workers will be intrinsically motivated to learn how to use social media and how to

represent themselves. But most importantly, they will be taught how to organize and host online events.

The Vygotsky Circle

The Vygotsky Circle shows three different zones where a learner can be in. These zones are the zone of independent learning, the zone of peer development and the zone of not being able (Peeters, 2018a). You want to make sure that people who are learning are in the zone of peer development. Why? Because this is the zone where learners cannot learn something completely by themselves, but this can with some help from external sources. This can be a teacher, an app or hints in some other way.

To use this to our advantage, testing should be done with exercises and we must constantly check up on the skill level that social workers are on, in terms of online media. This might be done with some sort of difficulty slider or maybe even a feedback question after every lesson/mission. This way, we can keep the challenge at the perfect level. Not too easy, but also not too hard.



Figure 4: Vygotsky Circle by Lev Vygotsky

The Forgetting Curve

As a human being, forgetting things is normal, and when educating someone, it has to be taken into account that forgetting is natural. However, the Forgetting Curve by Hermann Ebbinghaus shows when you need to take action to make sure that most matter will be remembered (Peeters, 2018b). There are certain moments that what someone has learned over the last couple of days needs to be repeated to combat forgetfulness. Ebbinghaus perfectly put that in a graph to show when old matter needs to be repeated, to make sure that almost no one forgets what they have learned.

With this information, we can structure the learning process of social workers in a certain way so that they will not forget specific functions of the social media they are learning. If repetition will not be done, social workers will forget most of the features and ways to deal with social media in just a couple of days. But with repeating this learning matter, this curve looks way more positive.

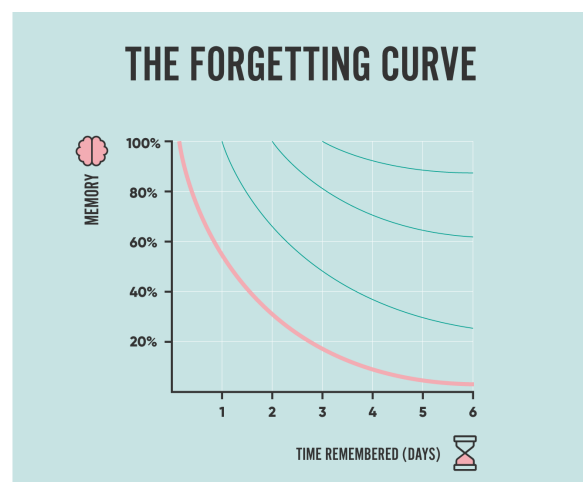


Figure 5: The Forgetting Curve by Hermann Ebbinghaus

Co-creation and Co-reflection

On Monday 27 March 2023, we went to Dynamo Jeugdwerk (Dynamo Youth Work), we spoke with Dirk-Jan van Soelen. He is the Youth Work Innovator at Dynamo and his job is to improve and innovate youth work. And this is not only for Eindhoven, as he is working on a project from the EU, together with different countries, to create the social worker of the future. This means a social worker who knows how to reach youth, how to be online and how to host online events.

Dirk-Jan had already experimented a lot with solutions for social media and youth workers, but most of these solutions turned out to not really work for the youth. He said that the Digicoaches at Dynamo (people who educate the digital and online world to the youth workers) tried making a social media platform specifically for youth work and the youth. Of course, taking youth out of their natural habitat is never good. Those same Digicoaches made a manual about the use of social media, but this was a massive textbook, which according to Dirk-Jan, didn't work.

When visiting Pitstop to talk to Matheus, the manager of Pitstop and also a youth worker himself, he told us that he would really like to see an interactive, fun and useful way to teach others how to use social media and how to delve into the world of the youth. Matheus proposed that we should let the youth know their youth workers personally and not separate professional and personal accounts. He also wanted us to educate social workers on how to stay safe online, but also to take risks sometimes, while he showed us that he could buy a gun in Eindhoven within three clicks on Telegram, if he wanted. With this, he wanted to show that youth workers need to research these dangerous parts of the internet, to get a good connection with what youth is dealing with online.

Conclusion

In short, when we educate social workers, we need to take into account that their motivation can be very low and that they will forget certain things. Both of these cons of the learning process can be countered with good teaching strategies and the application of gamification. This way, not only will the social workers stay motivated, but they will also find it fun to learn, because they can earn digital goods or even just digital points, which gives a feeling of satisfaction. And that will, in turn, once again boost the motivation and will to really learn how to use online media properly.

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