

In Regards to the Gamification of APA 6

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Before I begin giving my opinion about the implication of the APA gamification project, I'd like to make it clear that I'm 100% on board with the idea. I think when executed properly, games can be a great medium for education, and in some cases even superior. That being said, I think it's important for all of us who decide to tackle this project, to come in with a clear understanding of the behemoth we have to overcome in order to succeed, and simplify our goals.

What I mean to say is that the gamification of education is not necessarily new, and it has had many more failures in its history than successes. Turning education into a game can be very challenging, because as of yet there is no generic formula for its implementation, and it forces us as developers/designers to really think deeply about what makes a game, a game. For example, when we set out to make a platformer, we have preconditioned expectations for what a good platformer is, because the genre has so many tried and true mechanics that we can use as a template or starting point. But as soon as we decide to make the experience educational, we quickly find it difficult to integrate while maintaining the joy of games. There is no tried and true method for educational games.

I realize that the current example of the APA 6 project is just a test, to generate interest in the idea. That being said, playing it through shows my above point almost instantly. The games themselves are good, but the educational layer ruins them. Nobody wants to play a game, and then suddenly be interrupted by a question. Even more still, the style of the questions are contradictory to the most deepest aspects of games, which I'll mention in greater detail later. The current style lacks agency, and focuses on rote memorization, while offering no intrinsic motivators.

I saw in the comments on the original post about this project, many ideas for integrating APA 6 with traditional game mechanics, from casual mobile experiences, to full fledged role playing games

(RPG's). I strongly believe that this route will lead to a fundamentally broken game. If we try to look to pre-existing genres, and then adding a layer of APA on top of it, we will fail to capture the essence of good games, and miss the very point of playing games in the first place. We also would not be the first to fail at this project. This suggests we are tasked with creating new mechanics, and a game that does not fall under any specific genre currently defined.

I presume that if any of us decide to try to create an APA 6 game that we probably don't have much time to commit to the project. Being that most of us here at UoPeople are working full-time jobs, and many of us like myself have families to take care of, I want to make sure we set realistic, and achievable goals, and also make sure we are all on the same page, to ensure that the project see its completion.

So this brings us to the need for understanding the most basic fundamental requirements of a game, and to try to come to group definition of what constitutes as a game. Before reading on, I'd like to invite you to try this “game” and decide for yourself if it should be classified as a game or not. Copy this link into your browser: <http://www.necessarygames.com/my-games/loneliness/flash>

After playing Loneliness, you might have redefined what you consider to be a requirement of a game, or maybe you feel for some reason this is **not** a game. Either way this is precisely what we'll all have to come to agree on as we brainstorm ideas for what the APA 6 gamification will look like. I have many ideas about how we could make a game out of the APA 6 style, but I really want to get the group to think more deeply about what a game actually is, before we begin brainstorming too heavily.

So this is the question I leave you with; At a fundamental level, what is it that makes a game, a game? Be as creative or as candid as you want.