



Gamified Methods for Youth Engagement: Perspectives from Youth Work Professionals

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Abstract

As traditional participation methods lose appeal among youth, innovative approaches are needed to avert a democratic crisis. In [removed for blind review] project we explore how gamified societal participation methods can support youth participation in European countries. We conducted a digital survey for experts working with youth societal participation in four European countries, to explore what kind of gamified methods they currently use and what kind of challenges they have encountered with these methods. Based on 15 survey responses, Mentimeter, roleplaying (e.g., democracy workshop/simulation, Civic Quest), Kahoot, Seppo.io and DIY games (e.g., points for good deeds, crosswords, Jenga with questions glued on blocks) are currently used. Main challenges with gamified methods were varying background of participants (language skills, age, prior knowledge), unequal access to technology, focusing on game instead of topic, maintaining engagement, technological issues, lack of funding, game elements that discourage youth, unclear instructions and inflexible tools. The survey data was expanded with four interviews with youth work organization workers from Finland (2 participants), Estonia (2), Italy (2), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1). Interview topic was “a gamified dream method for a youth organization to support youth societal participation”. Results suggest that a “dream method” should engage youth to learn and share their opinions around societal topics promoting feeling of inclusion and societal participation. Gamification design must reflect goal-orientedness with collaboration over competition. Facilitating needs included ease of use, adapting to changes, simple to setup, low-cost, reusability, and efficiency. The method could be either analog or digital.

Keywords: youth societal participation; civic engagement; gamification strategies; digital and analog participation tools; European youth work