

Application of Gamification Pedagogy in the Mock Court Course Based on WeChat Platform

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Abstract: At present, the traditional mock court course teaching pattern still has some problems such as severe performance, excessive formalization and so on. It is difficult to meet the course teaching expectations. The use of gamification pedagogy in legal education is an effective way to help students achieve real gains in learning outcome. Therefore, the application of gamification pedagogy in the mock court course involves incorporating game elements in non-game environments and utilizing game mechanisms to encourage classroom participation. This article proposes to integrate points, badges, leaderboards (PBL) and other game elements into teaching through storytelling and role-play. This article conducts mock trial teaching in the context of legal conflicts based on WeChat platform, which is supported by flow state theory, constructivist learning theory and expectancy theory. In the “Crazy Rescue Plan”, a gamified teaching design framework, teachers take legal conflict scenarios creation and in-class mock trial practice as two major game levels, transforming the classroom into a challenge game. The purpose of this article is to apply gamification pedagogy into the mock court course teaching, enhance students’ learning interest and engagement, and hope to provide valuable references for the reform of legal practice teaching.

Keywords: gamification pedagogy, mock court course, WeChat platform

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of Study

1.1.1. Characteristics of the Mock Court Course

Traditional legal education mode in China focuses on imparting legal principles to students, ignoring the cultivation of students’ legal practical abilities. Faced with legal teaching crisis, some domestic law schools and departments began to introduce the “practical legal education model” of the United States [1].

Mock court course is generally a compulsory course for junior students, aiming at strengthening legal thinking and writing skills, mastering court trial skills and court etiquette to make up for the shortcomings of traditional legal education.

1.1.2. Gamification Pedagogy in Legal Education

People of all ages have enjoyed playing games for entertainment and occasionally for money. Recent studies have demonstrated that game can also be used to educational objectives. Enhancing students' intrinsic motivation, and their learning outcomes is one of the main objectives of the gamification [2]. Its use is supported by a variety of game mechanisms to motivate student to actively participate in teaching interaction.

Law students' classroom experiences may be reframed by the use of gamification pedagogy, which offers an alternate approach to the legal education crisis. The effectiveness of legal education can be improved by using new strategies that play an important role in the development of legal reasoning and complicated problem-solving [3]. Active legal education methods including role-play, seminars, case studies are among the new methodology that might be brought up.

1.1.3. Application of Gamification Pedagogy in the Mock Court Course

Incorporating gamification pedagogy in the legal education, so that students play different roles in particular case, such as judges, lawyers, defendants and so on. After students familiar with the trial procedures, they can flexibly use legal knowledge to solve specific cases [4].

The role-playing game (RPG) requires students to play certain roles in the simulation environment to solve legal problems which has the characteristic of performance [5]. The approach goes beyond the traditional teaching pattern of the mock court course because it is both interesting and immersive.

1.2. Background of Study

WeChat, a cross-platform communication tool, allows sending photo, video, and text across mobile phone networks while supporting single- and multi-person involvement [6]. There are more than 1 billion active WeChat users globally, and the WeChat platform provides abundant functions. Therefore, the application value of the WeChat platform in education is being explored by educators [7].

The WeChat platform can be used to optimize a series of teaching links, such as trial procedure, court investigation and debate, legal documents writing part of mock court course. Thus, WeChat teaching platform can be a teaching technology whereby gamification is deeply integrated into the mock court course teaching.

1.3. Statement of Problem

Many schools have organized mock court course teaching activities involving case analysis, complaint writing and other professional contents, which are all completed by students themselves.

Moreover, at present, most schools focus on the final mock court trial and take it as the main content of teaching, but pay insufficient attention to the knowledge and skills before the trial. In addition, it ignores the main role of students in the simulation court teaching, and does not design the content of the simulation court course from the basic skills that students should have.

The development of an empirical research framework for WeChat-based gamification pedagogy in the mock court course has received only limited academic attention. However, the impact of WeChat-based gamification pedagogy on students' attitudes and behaviors has been completely disregarded in the mock trial teaching, and there is little evidence to support this impact.

1.4. The Aim of the Research

This article discusses the introduction of gamification pedagogy into the mock court course, and based on the classroom teaching objectives, design an education game-“Crazy Rescue Plan”. By setting two

major game levels, legal conflict scenario creation and in-class mock trial practice, and adding six game elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards (PBL), classroom teaching is conducted through storytelling and role-play, forming a distinctive mock trial gamification mechanics. Students complete game tasks in groups using the WeChat platform, continuously receiving accumulated rewards, and evaluate the final game results based on the overall performance of each group.

This article aims to design a mock trial teaching game called “Crazy Rescue Plan”, and uses PBL gamification mechanics to simulate classroom teaching in the context of legal conflicts, inspiring students to understand the differences in the interests of various parties. Through participating in such a mock trial game, students have intrinsic motivation to learn law independently, familiarizing themselves with the trial procedures of the three major lawsuits, mastering the writing skills of legal documents.

2. Theory Basis

2.1. Flow State Theory

The flow state theory was created in the 1970s and was developed by Csikszentmihalyi [8]. Flow is a term used to describe a mental state in which a person is totally absorbed in what they are doing at the moment. There is a sense of fully immersion and participation. For example, a person is said to be in a “flow” if he completely forgets to eat while playing a game or working on a job. The area between anxiety and boredom during an activity is described by flow state theory, which is mainly about intrinsic motivation.

2.2. Constructivist Learning Theory

According to the constructivist learning theory, providing students with a suitable learning environment that allows them to access prior information, provides scaffolding, and includes other components will boost learning interest and motivation [9]. Teachers that employ a constructivist approach are tasked with creating assignments that encourage students and make them feel interested and motivated before they even realize it.

2.3. Expectancy Theory

There are three components in Vroom’s expectancy theory. Vroom believes that the level of motivation for an individual to participate in an activity is determined by the major factors: valence (V), instrumental (I), and expectation (E) [10]. In other words, if a person believes that success can bring good results and that these results have high value, and effort is the necessary path to success, then they will have the motivation to continuously make efforts.

3. Research Design

3.1. Teaching Pattern

Mock court course is an important method of legal practical teaching, which students need to simulate the complete case trial and judgment process on a group basis. As Figure 1 shows, the course mainly includes the following four stages: trial preparation stage, investigation and debate stage, discussion and sentencing stage, and document writing stage. Trials that students need to simulate can be divided into three types: criminal trial, civil trial, and administrative trial.

Due to law study is quite difficult bored, students’ learning enthusiasm is not high, so gamified teaching methods are introduced into the course. The teacher decomposes the overall teaching objectives of the course into multiple sub objectives, using six game elements such as points, badges,

leaderboards, and inter group PK to design a game task for the sub objectives, turning the entire classroom into a big challenge game. With the help of the major functions of WeChat platform, students complete game tasks in groups by themselves. At the end of the course, the final game results are evaluated based on the performance of each group throughout the process.

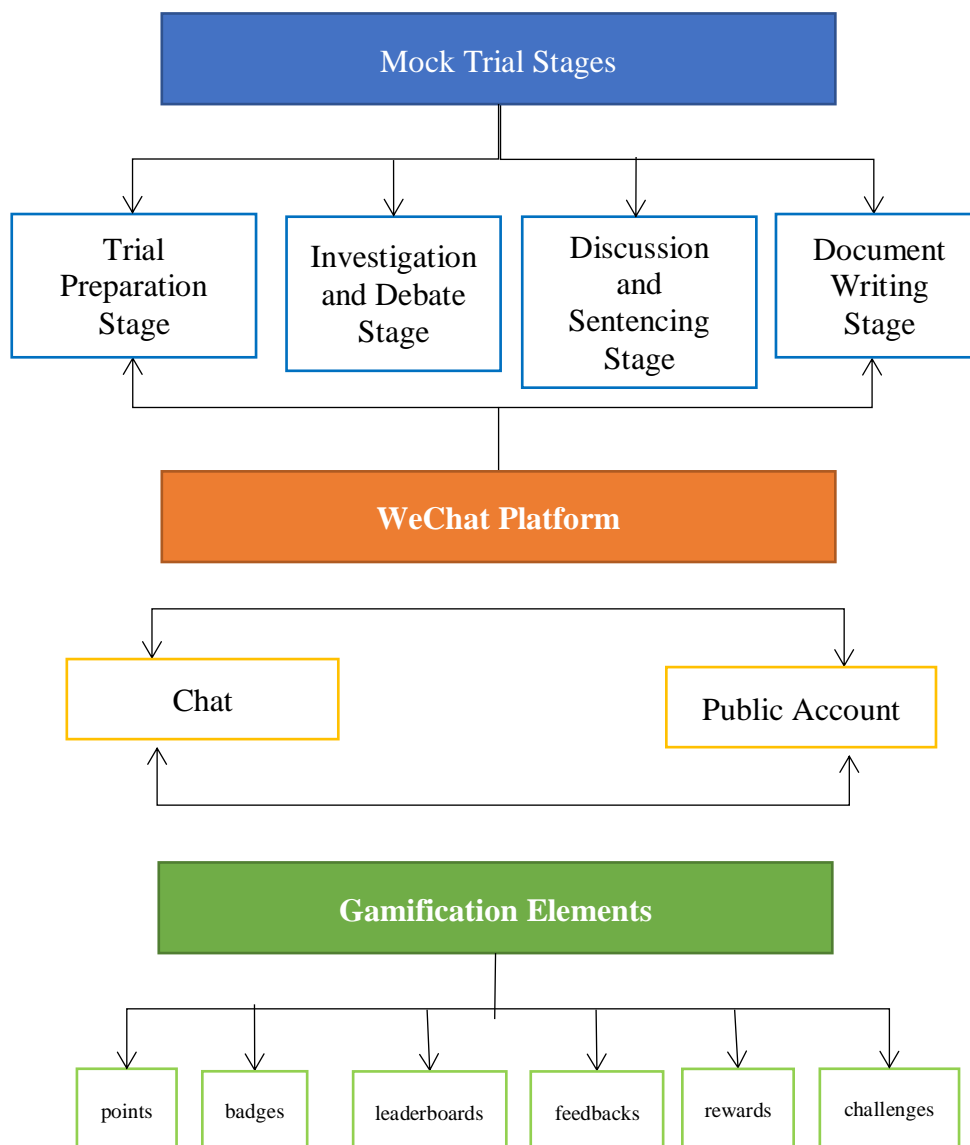


Figure 1: WeChat-based Gamification Teaching Pattern.

3.2. Design Framework

The “Crazy Rescue Plan”, a mock court game teaching design, aims to improve students’ ability to solve problems and learn how to collaborate with others and so on. The game is divided into two main levels: legal conflict scenarios creation and in-class mock trial practice, which can be mutually beneficial. Gamification components such as points, badges, and leaderboards are integrated into classroom teaching through storytelling and role-play.

Students participating in the “Crazy Rescue Plan” game better demonstrate their understanding of the case. They create legal conflict scenarios based on real or classic cases, allowing students to personally interpret the beginning and end of a case, from proposing, analyzing to resolving legal disputes. It is easier to mobilize participants to engage in immersive and experiential thinking based

on their roles in legal conflicts. The “Crazy Rescue Plan” game has three elements: simulation elements, gaming elements, and educational elements, and the integration of them enables students to consciously participate in the mock trial practice, activating the entire classroom teaching. Overall, the mock trial game design framework is as follows (see Figure 2 and Table 1).

3.2.1. Legal Conflict Scenarios Creation

Before class, teacher publish teaching requirements on Chat, and recommend students to pay attention to relevant public account, in which students can collect, read, and organize course materials. For example, students can use the “Supreme People’s Court” public account, and click on the “Judicial Disclosure” column to enter the China Open Court Trial Website (<http://tingshen.court.gov.cn/>) and the China Judgements Online Website (<https://wenshu.court.gov.cn/>). Students are needed to independently search for the style of litigation documents and write relevant litigation documents according to the format requirements.

Students voluntarily form teams through Chat, with two groups for criminal case, civil case, and administrative case respectively. Each group can be further divided into four groups: trial group, prosecution group, defense group, and comprehensive group. Each group selects a team leader and challenges the competition with a resounding title. The group discussion is conducted on Chat, and the contribution of the group members is recorded. The team leader needs to provide a list of members and a team contribution table after class. Teams with clear division of assignment and complete trial procedures will receive point rewards.

The student group will discuss the legal conflict scenario design of the “Crazy Rescue Plan” in the Chat. The storyline can revolve around the puppy and be adapted based on typical or real cases. The teacher will enter the Chat of each group, and add elements of difficult cases to make the entire story more challenging, providing timely feedback. For the design of legal conflict situations, different scores will be awarded in order. A complete case description scores three points, a logically rigorous case scores four points, and an attractive case scores five points.

The legal conflict scenarios creation designed by students meets the expectancy theory. Teachers reward groups that excel in the scene design process, which can guide them to form correct learning expectations. In addition, challenging elements are added to the case to enhance their intrinsic motivation to solve problems.

3.2.2. In-class Mock Trial Practice

On one hand, during the court investigation stage, the plaintiff and the defendant provide evidence and cross examination around the dispute focus summarized by the collegiate panel, and provide relevant evidence on the facts claimed by each party. For the cross examination part of evidence, different scores will be awarded in order. For those with topic-related discussion scores three points, a sufficient and strong evidence scores four points, and a clear logic for cross examination scores five points. Each group prepares relevant evidence materials based on the case, and the teacher uses points to provide feedback on students’ classroom performance, creating an appropriate learning environment for students. Through real-time point rewards, students can gain a sense of control over the trial process, which reflects the constructivist learning theory perspective.

On the other hand, during the court debate stage, the parties debate and speak around the focus of the dispute. This is the most exciting part of the mock trial. For the completion of the debate section, different points will be awarded in sequence. Those with clear points will be awarded three points, those with valid and sufficient arguments will be awarded four points, and those who proficiently use syllogism will be awarded five points. Students engage in experiential thinking as roles in legal

conflicts, and fully immerse themselves in the legal conflict scene, which helps students fully focus on simulating the trial and achieve a state of flow, rather than reciting or memorizing the text.

The above points will be placed on the leaderboards in real-time through Chat. These points can also be elevated to become group badges. Based on the accumulated points of each group in these gamified activities, the best group will be awarded the “Game Clearance King Badge”. In addition, a specialized group badge will be set up for the legal document section. The group with excellent legal documents will be awarded the “Document Writing King Badge”.

In addition to group badges, badges are also set up for outstanding individuals. For example, students who play performance roles, such as parties and witnesses, the focus is on assessing their performance ability, and for individuals who perform outstandingly, they are awarded the “Best Actor Badge”. For students who serve as legal professionals such as judges, prosecutors, agents, and defenders, and for individuals with outstanding court trial control abilities, the “Best Controller Badge” are awarded; Individuals with outstanding court trial debate abilities are awarded the “Best Debater Badge”, while individuals with outstanding case analysis abilities are awarded the “Best Reasoner Badge”.

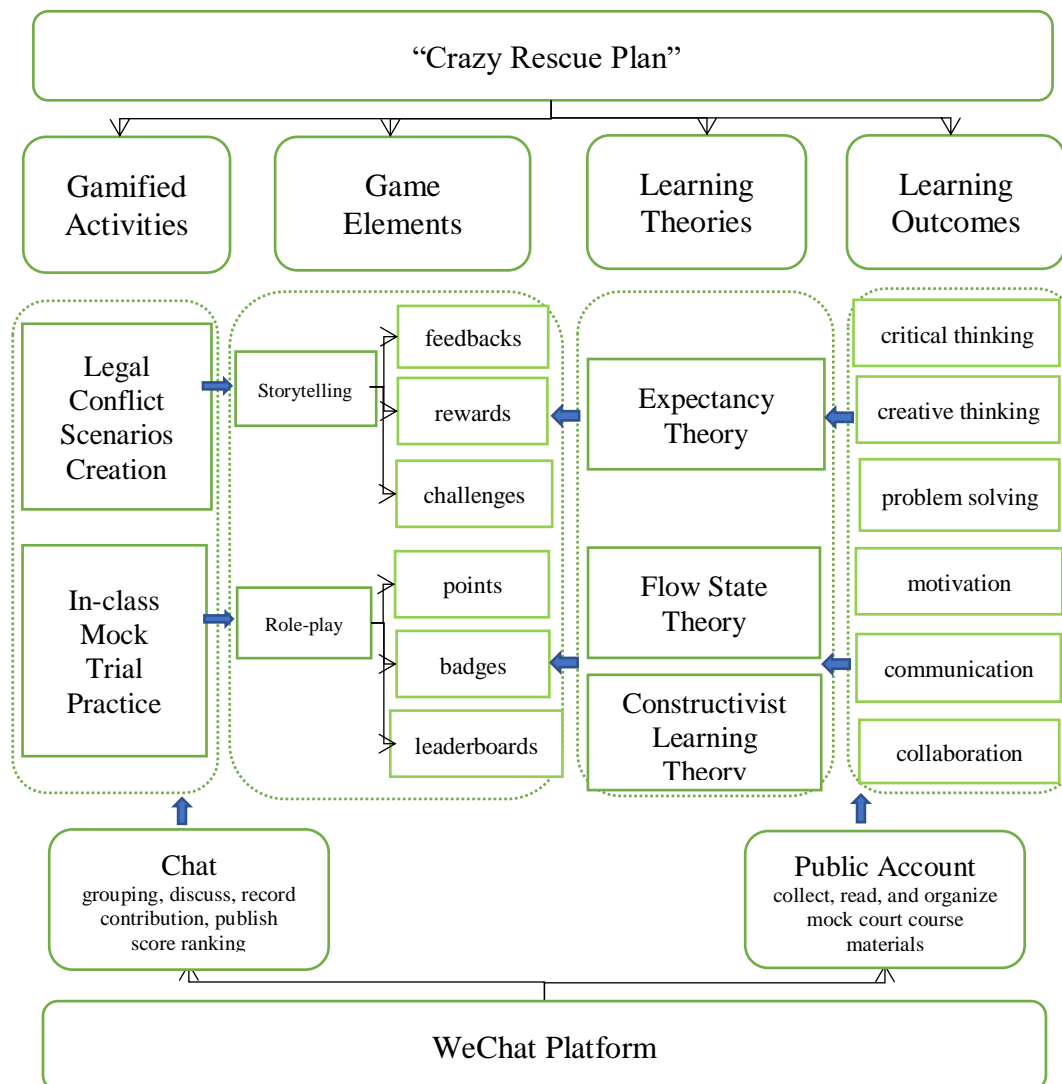


Figure 2: Design Framework of the Mock Court Course.

Table 1: PBL Gamification Mechanics Rules.

Gamification Mechanics	Scores	Legal Conflict Scenarios Creation	In-class Mock Trial Practice	
			Investigation stage	Debate stage
Points	3	content complete	topic-related discussion	clear points
	4	logically rigorous	sufficient and strong evidence	valid and sufficient arguments
	5	challenging and attractive	clear logic for cross examination	proficiently use syllogism
Badges	Group Badges	“Document Writing King Badge”	“Game Clearance King Badge”	
	Individual Badges	“Best Actor Badge”, “Best Controller Badge” “Best Debater Badge”, “Best Reasoner Badge”		
Leader-boards	Inter Group PK	The above points and badges obtained by each group will be placed on the leaderboards in real-time.		

4. Conclusions

Gamification is increasingly being used as an innovative approach to many problems in classroom teaching. One effective way to reform the mock court course is to introduce gamification pedagogy. Supported by three major theories, this article has set up a mock trial education game called “Crazy Rescue Plan”, which includes two major game levels: legal conflict scenario creation and in-class mock trial practice. Six game elements, including points, badges, and leaderboards and so on, are added to the game. With the support of WeChat platform, groups are rewarded through inter group PK to help students achieve real gains in learning outcomes.

In this article, students are asked to create a legal conflict story case in the mock trial game. When designing story, students can cultivate creative thinking skill. When rehearsing stories, they experience the legal conflicts in the story, engage in deep experiential thinking, and consciously integrate into in-class mock trial practice, activating the entire classroom teaching and mastering legal practical skills.

Therefore, encouraging students to participate in four trial stages through gamification is an important step in enhancing students’ intrinsic motivation to learn law. To improve students’ learning interest, this article proposes a gamification design framework for the mock trial based on the WeChat platform, which helps to innovate traditional mock court course. Future research can focus on how to apply the gamified teaching pattern to the mock trial teaching through WeChat platform, and what technology support can be better integrated into the classroom teaching pattern.

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