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METHODOLOGY

for unemployed adults

Game-based digital learning. Playing to teach

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1. INTRODUCTION

General information on the methodology

The methodology of **GAMES4YOU (Game-based digital learning. Playing to teach)** has been created to facilitate the effective use of the e-toolkit, which is designed **to assist adult educators** in enhancing the learning experience through gamification and innovative techniques. We believe that this e-toolkit, which integrates modern pedagogical approaches like **gamification**, will help unemployed adults acquire new knowledge in specific educational areas. The e-toolkit aligns with core values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and human rights. The e-toolkit is structured into four modules, allowing users to delve into the key tools and technologies associated with gamification.

The first module introduces **digital gamification for adult education**. The second one deals with the **principles and theories** of gamification with digital tools. Furthermore, **tools and technologies** for gamification will be presented in the third module. The fourth module concludes with **practical tips**.

This methodology has been tailored specifically for **unemployed adults**, as well as for educators and trainers who work with this demographic. It caters to the unique needs and interests of unemployed adults by offering a variety of tailored tools and resources. It is grounded in gamification principles, which have proven effective in engaging learners and enhancing motivation. Our goal is to equip educators with **new skills relevant to the digital age** that can be effectively utilized in the classroom, with the aim of making these skills transferable to the job market.

The content of this methodology includes an understanding of **the importance of tailoring the methodology to the specific target group**, how the methodology supports work with the target group, and providing teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement the methodology in their teaching practice.

Brief description of the target group

In this methodology, the term 'unemployed adults' that is used to indicate people who are above 18 in age, without employment, seeking a stable occupation, available for work but cannot find one, including those who may work occasionally but lack a steady source of income.

According to Eurostat (2025), the unemployment rate in the EU is currently at 5.7% as of February 2025, which is a slight decrease from previous periods. However, reducing the unemployment rate and enhancing social inclusion are among the main EU's social policies.

Therefore, it is important to apply different methods to support adults in their finding for employment journey, especially educational support, and this methodology for gamification application can be used as one.

Content of the methodology

The methodology is designed to help educators effectively use the Games4You e-toolkit when working with unemployed adults, by providing clear guidance on how to apply gamification and digital tools in their teaching.

It emphasizes the importance of understanding the specific needs, challenges, and interests of unemployed learners and offers practical ways to engage them through interactive and personalized learning experiences.

The methodology includes strategies for adapting teaching approaches to meet learners' cognitive, emotional, and technological needs, ensuring that education is both accessible and motivating. Educators will find useful digital platforms, recommended tools, and tips for implementation, along with case studies, best practices, and research to support their teaching.

Overall, this methodology aims to improve learning outcomes, build digital skills, and make learning more relevant and transferable to real-life and employment contexts.

Objectives of the methodology

The methodology is designed with the following objectives in mind:

- To help educators better apply the 4 Modules in the e-toolkit to the target group with which they are working by demonstrating and highlighting main challenges that the target group faces and how the e-toolkit can help address them.
- To provide a better vision of how gamification can be implemented in different real-life contexts by giving examples of using various accessible digital tools.
- To help educators enhance learners' engagement in learning.
- To provide information, examples and lessons can be learned from previously successful applied organizations or institutions.
- To help educators understand the initial needs of the target group and how to better adapt to each need.

Benefits of the methodology to the target group

This methodology is designed to support unemployed adults by making learning more engaging, practical, and relevant to their needs. Through the use of gamification and digital tools, the methodology helps create a positive learning environment that boosts motivation and builds useful skills. It provides activities and examples that are easy to understand and connected to real-life situations, making learning more meaningful.

The approach also supports personal development by helping learners gain confidence, improve their digital skills, and become more active in their search for employment. By making learning enjoyable and goal-oriented, the methodology encourages adults to stay committed to their learning journey and better prepare for future job opportunities.

2. IMPORTANCE OF USING THE METHODOLOGY FOR EDUCATORS WHO WORK WITH UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

To successfully address the individual requirements and difficulties of their students, **educators must employ a methodology created especially for their target audience**. Teachers can design and implement individualized learning experiences and increase the likelihood of effective learning outcomes by understanding the unique needs and characteristics of their students.

2.1. HOW THE METHODOLOGY HELPS TO WORK WITH UNEMPLOYED ADULTS?

The e-toolkit approach was created exclusively for **educators to interact with unemployed adults**, a population that has particular difficulties when it comes to learning. By using this approach, educators may establish a welcoming and inclusive classroom that caters to each student's unique needs and interests. The methodology supports teachers in effectively interacting with a particular target group in various ways. First, it provides **a structure for comprehending the unique needs and difficulties encountered by unemployed adults**, which allows for the creation of tailored learning experiences. This process may involve using different assessment and evaluation tools to gather data on student learning, which then informs the creation of these customized experiences.

Second, the e-toolkit **provides educators with a range of methods and approaches to involve and inspire their students**. This entails the use of interactive and participatory learning methods, like gamification and simulation, to cultivate a supportive and inclusive educational setting.

Ultimately, the e-toolkit **provides educators with a range of tools and resources to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching practices and improve their methods**. This includes using a variety of assessment and evaluation methods to gather information on student learning, which can subsequently inform future learning experiences.

2.2. HOW TO USE THE E-TOOLKIT EFFECTIVELY IN EDUCATION AND MAXIMIZE LEARNING OUTCOMES?

To enhance learning experiences for students, educators need to utilize the e-toolkit appropriately and efficiently. The e-toolkit is a versatile tool that is technology-based and provides educators with a flexible, supportive and inclusive learning environment, personalizing learning experiences for students.

By thoughtfully incorporating the e-toolkit, educators can increase student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement by employing the following applications and approaches:

- **Use technology to enhance learning experiences:** The e-toolkit provides educators with opportunities to integrate combinations of digital tools and platforms that create a dynamic educational experience for students, strengthening student learning.
- **Provide regular feedback and assessments:** Providing feedback using the wide range of tools and methods in the e-toolkit allows educators to track student performance, give constructive feedback, and acknowledge improvements.
- **Enable collaboration and engagement:** Being able to work together in groups and discussions is a way to foster engagement. Using the interactive and engaging tools in the e-toolkit will foster collaboration, letting students work together easily.
- **Create individual learning plans:** The e-toolkit allows educators to create learning plans that are tailored to individual students' needs and interests. This creates a better and more relevant learning experience for students during their learning journey.
- **Use gamification and simulations:** Gamifying and simulating learning experiences with the e-toolkit will create engaging and immersive learning experiences that draw students into the content and help enhance the understanding of the concepts.

- **Promote self-directed learning:** The e-toolkit provides tools and techniques that encourage students to take control of their learning, which instills independence and responsibility.

By utilizing this range of strategies, educators can maximize the opportunities available through the e-toolkit for a student-centered learning experience that promotes positive outcomes and sustained motivation.

3. IMPACTS OF THE E-TOOLKIT ON UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

Students can **build a diverse skill set**, including technical skills (such as using office software) and soft skills (such as negotiating), making their CV and LinkedIn profile stand out, increasing their chances of getting hired.

Students can **complete training programs without being limited by time, cost, or location**, helping them remove barriers to accessing education and training, further maintaining a continuous learning process and better preparing for the labor market.

Students can **become competent in engaging with technology**, learn appropriate digital skills (such as using LinkedIn and email for professional purposes), and directly network with employers online, significantly expanding their potential job opportunities and building on their career options.

The students will likely **have confidence in their ability to succeed**, provide resilience as they navigate through the obstacles in job searching, despite rejection or disappointment, and ultimately be committed to being lifelong learners, resulting in more positive, successful employment opportunities.

With the new skills and confidence built through the e-toolkit, students can **find relevant employment**, increased income, enhanced mental health and quality of life that provides them with a positive outlook for the future. Gamification e-toolkits, with tools like MOODLE, Kahoot!, Classcraft, and TalentLMS, help the target group learn skills, access training, overcome technological barriers, and stay motivated through practical steps.

Impacts include competitive skill acquisition, removal of educational barriers, technological proficiency, increased self-esteem, and improved employability, **leading to personal stability and well-being.**

Academic sources reinforce the effectiveness of this approach, ensuring that unemployed adults can leverage e-toolkits to increase their chances of successfully addressing unemployment.

4. HOW DOES THE MATERIAL ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF UNEMPLOYED ADULTS?

4.1. UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

Being unemployed can cause frustration and difficulties in various aspects of life. Adults who struggle to find employment may require financial support, healthcare accessibility, job training, upskilling opportunities, career counselling, and job search. Challenges such as digital divide, technological barriers, low motivation and engagement, discrimination, limited sources for training and networking, may emerge during this period. In this section, we want to emphasise **the need for skills training and the challenges of technological issues, motivation and engagement.**

Research from Eurofound on job content has shown that in European countries, tasks are becoming less routine and transitioning towards independent and decision-making-based. It is expected that in the future, **job requirements will increasingly focus on interpersonal skills such as communication and teamwork.** In addition, findings from Cedefop's survey on skills and jobs demonstrate that many workers across Europe self-evaluated as underqualified at the time of hiring, showing that their skills did not fully match their job demands (Cedefop, 2018, p.98). This implies the need for adults to **cultivate job-relevant skills**, including technical competencies such as digital literacy, vocational training, etc. and soft skills, to meet employer expectations and increase the chance of employability in today's competitive and ongoing evolution job market.

The rapid shift toward automation and digital economies has resulted in substantial skill mismatches, with many unemployed adults unprepared for new occupations. For example, industries are increasingly **demanding digital proficiency, data analysis, and customer service abilities**, even for entry-level roles. In a recent analysis of the demand for digital skills in the EU labour market, over half of workers reported lacking the digital competencies required for their jobs, with demand for such skills increasing across all sectors, not just in the ICT field (Cedefop, European Skills and Jobs Survey, 2021).

Upskilling is essential not just for obtaining employment but also for adapting to changing workplace demands, such as remote work or hybrid environments. Unemployed adults who do not receive targeted training risk remaining unemployed or underemployed in low-skilled, unstable employment.

Emotional hurdles, such as discouragement from job rejections or a lack of rapid outcomes, contribute to poor engagement and high dropout rates in training programs. Unemployment frequently erodes self-efficacy and motivation because adults see training as detached from actual work outcomes or are overwhelmed by failures. This problem is exacerbated by the monotony of traditional schooling, which may fail to captivate attention or encourage perseverance. **Engaging jobless adults requires techniques that restore confidence and make learning enjoyable**, especially for individuals who have been unemployed for a long time or have been rejected several times.

4.2. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND NEEDS THROUGH THE E-TOOLKIT

In the e-toolkit, we clearly specify the basic definitions, principles and theories of gamification to help people from different backgrounds understand the term and concept behind this method. It explains how gamification enhances learning through elements such as rewards and challenges and **why these tools are effective** (e.g., stimulating dopamine to maintain interest).

Being equipped with thorough knowledge will help the target group understand how the method works and be stimulated to apply it to their self-training as a novel way differs from traditional schooling and training.

The target group can use the tools suggested in the e-toolkit to create their own learning modules, modified to their own needs and wishes.

To develop skills and upskill, students can:

- Read the theory section in the e-toolkit and the documentation (from <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/gamification>), to understand how points, badges, and challenges drive learning.
- Create **interactive quizzes** on Quizizz or Kahoot! to learn skills like resume writing or communication. For example, design a quiz on Kahoot! about interview skills, asking questions like “What’s the best way to answer a weakness question?” and using points to track progress.
- Use TalentLMS to access **gamified courses** on digital skills (like using Excel) or soft skills (like time management) and complete modules with gamified challenges, like solving customer scenarios.

Example: The student wants to work in sales. On TalentLMS, he/she can take a gamified course on sales skills, complete role-playing scenarios (like convincing a customer), and earn points for reaching goals.

To access education and training, students can:

- Visit MOODLE or Canvas **to take free or low-cost courses**. Find gamified modules, like a job-hunting skills exercise, and learn at their own pace.
- Use Nearpod **to access interactive lessons** with quizzes and polls that fit your schedule. For example, take a Nearpod lesson on negotiation skills, studying for 20 minutes a day.
- Using the e-toolkit guide, use ClassDojo **to create personal learning goals**, like completing 5 communication skills exercises, with virtual rewards to keep you motivated.

Example: The student is busy taking care of his/her family and only has time to study in the evenings. On Canvas, he/she can take a gamified course on digital skills, complete short quizzes in his/her free time, and use his/her phone.

To tackle technological divide and technological barriers, students can:

- Use Kahoot! or Quizizz for a simple introduction **to learning without high digital skills**, as both platforms have very user-friendly interfaces and are very easy to use. Simply follow the step-by-step instructions in the e-toolkit to set up an account and get started!
- Use Mentimeter to engage in **practicing gamified digital skills exercises**, such as creating visual charts or collaborating in Google Docs, by answering interactive questions.
- Utilize the e-toolkit suggestions and visit local library or community center **to get free entry to their computers and Wi-Fi**, giving access to MOODLE or TalentLMS even when there is no internet at home.

Example: The student only has a phone and is not familiar with technology. Based on the e-toolkit, he/she uses Kahoot! to learn professional email writing skills through simple quizzes, then goes to the library to access MOODLE and take a course on LinkedIn.

To increase motivation and engagement, students can:

- Use Classcraft to create learning tasks as if they are part of a **role-playing game**, for example, "level up" by completing challenges like the interview skills task and earn points or rewards for completing tasks.
- Use Credly to earn recognized digital badges by completing learning modules on platforms like TalentLMS or MOODLE, and stay motivated by **sharing your achievements** on LinkedIn.
- Participate in interactive Mentimeter exercises **to keep things engaging**, such as answering gamified time management questions and viewing the results on a live leaderboard.

Example: The student feels discouraged after being rejected from multiple jobs. On Classcraft, he/she can set a goal to complete three communication skills tasks, earning virtual rewards when achieved, helping he/she keep learning.

4.3. HOW GAMIFICATION, DIGITAL TOOLS, AND PERSONALIZATION DRIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

Gamification engages learners by using game elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards, as in Kahoot! and Classcraft, stimulating the release of dopamine to sustain interest and effort. It creates intrinsic **motivation through fun**, low-pressure challenges that encourage ongoing engagement.

Digital tools like MOODLE, Canvas, Quizizz, and TalentLMS stimulate learners through interactive, **user-friendly platforms that provide instant feedback, adaptive materials, and interactive, engaging content**. Additionally, tools such as Nearpod and Mentimeter use **real-time polls, quizzes**, and other interactive features that capture attention, allow for active participation, and aid retention, all by keeping learning stimulating and memorable.

Customized activities help engage learners by tailoring content to each individual's goals and levels. This can be powered by ClassDojo and Blackboard. Personalized tasks and assignments, like scenarios in TalentLMS, **increase relevance and a sense of ownership**, driving deep engagement in their learning process.

5. ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS OF USING THE E-TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

The e-toolkit offers great opportunities for educators who support unemployed adults by providing them with an engaging and stimulating learning experience. The e-toolkit is an **interactive and flexible platform that promotes learning and growth**. By using the e-toolkit, educators can establish an engaging, learner-supportive, and effective educational environment based on the needs of this adult group.

The e-toolkit offers educators and their unemployed adult learners the following advantages:

- **Enhancing motivation:** The e-toolkit provides a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience, motivating unemployed adults to see the process as an exciting, rewarding, and stimulating experience and to remain motivated, committed, and involved in their learning.
- **Increasing learner outcomes:** The e-toolkit promotes improvement in important academic and vocational outcomes for unemployed adults through an efficient and effective learning experience, supporting their employability and skill development.
- **Effective communication and collaboration:** The e-toolkit is a shared tool, promoting clear communication to facilitate collaboration between educators and unemployed adults, thus enabling learners and educators to provide feedback and articulate their needs and concerns clearly.
- **Adequate flexibility and adaptability:** The e-toolkit is designed to be flexible and adaptable to respond to the many different needs and circumstances of unemployed adults, enabling a relevant and tailored learning experience.
- **Increased independence:** The e-toolkit promotes independence for unemployed adults as it enables them to take responsibility for their learning through attempting to create their own goals and by managing their own progress, supporting increased independence and autonomy while learning.

The e-toolkit offers teachers flexibility to help create an interactive and inclusive learning space for unemployed adults. With a range of activities and opportunities to encourage collaboration, the e-toolkit helps increase motivation and engagement.

Motivation and engagement lead to better learning outcomes by supporting adults in actively engaging and developing skills that are relevant in their lives. It also supports their personal development by helping them develop confidence in learning and preparing for future employment.

6. HOW TO USE THE E-TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATORS WORKING WITH UNEMPLOYED ADULTS MOST EFFICIENTLY?

In this section, we will share several case studies, research and best practice examples that **highlight the deployment of gamification e-toolkits**. These examples illustrate the significant benefits related to gamification, and provide concrete and manageable ways for individuals and groups to use gamification strategies and associated toolkits in digital learning settings.

6.1. CASE STUDIES

SkillUp: Empowering young Italians for digital careers

SkillUp is an online training program, fully funded, that teaches young Italians aged 18–34 who are unemployed, underemployed, or NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), the skills necessary for careers in the digital and technology sectors. SkillUp aims to address the digital skills gap in Italy, and in conjunction with having 70% of people digitally skilled by 2025, it provides no-cost training with pathways to direct employment, to help empower young adults to thrive in today's job market.

SkillUp is led by Generation Italy, a non-profit founded by McKinsey & Company, alongside Fondazione Adecco, and was endorsed by ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities). SkillUp is funded by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. This 14-week, full-time program is offered online to student groups. To date, 11 groups have completed it, and 15 additional groups are scheduled.

SkillUp is open to all eligible candidates, and no prior experience or education is needed. All students are expected to complete a short online logical reasoning test and to have a motivational interview to gain access to the program. All graduates receive a guaranteed job interview with one of the 800+ partner companies of SkillUp, indicating high potential for job prospects.

SkillUp's curriculum is designed to equip attendees with job-ready skills in digital roles by blending technical and professional training. It teaches programming in Java, Python, and JavaScript for web and mobile app development; using tools and languages such as SQL, Excel, and Python to analyze data; and digital marketing skills, such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and social media. It also includes introductory modules on cybersecurity and cloud computing (AWS, Azure) to acknowledge the changes in technology in the industry. As employers are seeking applicants who also possess strong soft skills, SkillUp developed opportunities to build their communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills through CV workshops and mock interviews.

The curriculum is delivered through experiential, hands-on, project-based learning that the participant will carry out real work, building a website or analysing data, for example. It is delivered through a virtual platform with a mix of live and recorded modules, interactive exercises, regular support from a mentor, and a collaborative cohort model. To remove barriers and connect to the employer network, SkillUp's mission is to upskill young adults in Italy with in-demand skills, find meaningful employment, and contribute to Italy's digital transformation.

LevelUp – UK program for long-term unemployed adults

LevelUp is an innovative, gamification training program based in the UK that is designed to help adults aged over 30 who are long-term unemployed (many of whom experience social, educational, and economic barriers). Developed by Catch22, a social enterprise focused on employability, in collaboration with the LearnPlay Foundation, a leading provider of digital learning solutions, LevelUp turns traditional job readiness training into a fun, game-style programme.

The gamification of the training process helps participants build their digital skills, motivating them to gain confidence and sustainable employment, while contributing to broader UK efforts to combat unemployment and digital exclusion as a part of various initiatives, including the UK Digital Strategy.

The programme offers an innovative approach to workforce readiness, taking shape as a virtual journey where participants can complete "quests" to develop the necessary skills. Quests include writing CVs, interviewing practice, or developing digital skills which employers need in the contemporary workplace, including Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, and basic coding platforms. Participants can earn experience points (XP), unlock badges of achievement, and compete with each other on leaderboards - all to foster motivation and a sense of achievement in completing activities. Each quest involves interactive simulations that explicitly mirror the way people interact in the workplace, and the use of virtual mentors to support the learning process, to ensure accessibility and opportunity for all learners.

The program is delivered on a fully online platform and is completed entirely virtually to provide a flexible and self-guided experience to accommodate a range of personal situations - this flexibility is particularly beneficial for those who are navigating competing expectations of family, work and life.

LevelUp's curriculum combines job-focused skills with basic digital literacy and professional development. The technical instructional components of the curriculum focus on tools relevant to the workplace, like managing a spreadsheet, email communications in the workplace, or introductory web development or data entry skills, preparing them for jobs in administration, customer service, or technical support.

There are also many soft skills embedded in the quests, like time management, teamwork, and flexibility, that offer users simulations of real-world activities like making mock client calls or walking through project planning. The gamification of the material ensures the learning is fun, which is really beneficial for the elements of resilience and building self-efficacy, which are quite significant for a demographic of adults who are often getting back into the workforce after a long absence from employment.

In its pilot, LevelUp had a strong impact: 80% of adults who started the program completed the program, and over 50% of adults who completed the program found jobs or internships within three months of finishing the program.

The mix of gamification with accommodating support provides a nuanced understanding of the unique insecurities and challenges faced by long-term unemployed adults, besides enabling users to find ways to overcome issues, reclaim their confidence, and potentially instill independent economic self-sufficiency in an increasingly digital workplace across sectors.

Click Start by TechUPWomen – Digital skills for women in tech

Click Start is a UK initiative led by TechUPWomen working in partnership with Durham University and Catch22 to help women who face barriers to employment and have little or no experience with digital technology, into the tech workforce. By taking a gamified learning approach, Click Start transforms a digital skills training course into an interactive, engaging activity, allowing women to build confidence in their digital skills and employability. This initiative responds to the challenge set out in the UK Digital Strategy to address the gender gap in tech and improve levels of digital inclusion in the UK.

Click Start is fully online, focuses on women with limited or no technical background, and offers a safe space for women to learn job-relevant skills. The women learn by doing practical challenges, they receive achievement badges, and have mentoring sessions, which transform the learning into something tangible and not so daunting. The gamification format provides confidence in being able to learn, takes anxiety away from the learning, holds engagement through tracking progress, and builds community with peer competition and shared targets.

In implementing the Click Start programme, around 80% of women who engaged completed the course, and many moved into roles around tech, including software development, digital marketing, and data analysis, all with really strong employment outcomes.

Click Start's curriculum offers practical, industry-relevant tech skills for entry-level roles, along with professional development. The technical training provides foundational coding skills in languages like Python or HTML/CSS for web development, digital marketing knowledge like SEO and managing social media, and data literacy using tools such as Excel or Google Analytics.

The curriculum also involves becoming familiar with technologies for the workplace. For example, participants will learn about project management platforms like Trello and communication platforms like Slack. Soft skills like problem solving, collaboration, and communicating professionally are examined throughout the program using simulated experiences of workplaces and feedback from mentors. Career support includes preparing resumes and conducting interviews, so participants are well prepared when they begin applying for jobs.

The curriculum's success, achieving completion rates and job placements higher than its original targets, comes via gamification, making training fun, affordable, and engaging. Gamification creates motivation through visible rewards representing achievement progress along a structured pathway.

Click Start's main focus on community makes it inclusive and comfortable for learners to explore these unique hurdles women face re-entering the workforce or transitioning into technological careers. As demonstrated through Click Start's completion rates and proven job placements, gamification can be a powerful method to reinvent education for adults and to support a target audience facing painful vulnerability to be economically independent and participate in the digital economy.

6.2. RESEARCH

Gamification in non-compulsory English language classes for adults

Gamification, the use of elements of games in educational contexts, has been shown to be successful at increasing engagement and motivation in voluntary English as a second language classes for adults. A systematic review by researchers at the University of Jaén, Spain, concludes that gamified learning strategies can address some problems of non-attendance and motivation in voluntary adult education programs. Gamified learning activities organise and incorporate games like points, badges, leaderboards, and collaborative and interactive challenges, and they shape a higher degree of learning stress in adult learners.

Gamified voluntary adult education programs can promote attendance from learners who may only otherwise attend a few times and, ultimately, shape the commitment to become lifelong learners of English.

The review identifies that adult learners who have other obligations (such as work and family) enjoy gamification as it 'takes the edge off' the problem of having to study. In voluntary English courses, using activities such as quizzes to develop vocabulary, roleplay activities to drive conversation practice, and using digital quizzes (with instant feedback) were used and reported to reduce learning anxiety and that they wanted to continue to participate.

Gamified voluntary programs are generally facilitated by or mediated through digital platforms like Kahoot, Quizlet, and sometimes bespoke developments, and with them, adult students can monitor their learning progress as well as enjoy 'winning' awards (or trophies) for learning, and flagging achievement, which acts to motivate adult learners as they have diverse learning histories. The review concludes that such strategies do indeed improve attendance and the learner's capacity for English when using it for authentic communication.

In addition to the engagement factor, gamification promotes pragmatic language acquisition relevant to adult needs. The elements that comprise the curriculum typically include tasks that focus on workplace-related skills, such as writing professional emails, attending meetings, or reporting cultural facts about being an English speaker in a particular context.

Through virtual simulation and team challenges, a feeling of community is fostered among peers and teamwork is encouraged. The Jaén review states there is evidence that gamified learning contexts lead to better rates of retention and sustained motivation as learners have agency in progressing through learning tasks that they perceive are achievable and satisfying.

The success of gamification as a learning component in optional English classes demonstrates the contribution it can make to adult education, particularly for participants who are studying for personal or professional reasons. By establishing an immersive and supportive learning experience, these programs empower adults to engage with English skill development, which offers them global experiences and opportunities throughout their lives.

Gaming-based intervention for unemployed young adults in Norway

A landmark study by researchers at the University of Stavanger, Norway, investigated a gaming-based positive psychology intervention designed to assist unemployed young adults ages 18–30. The study, which was published in JMIR Human Factors in 2024, describes how young job seekers often experience low self-esteem and self-efficacy during the job search experience, and used the advent of gaming to help young job seekers build resilience, increase motivation, and improve employability, in a digital environment that could be scaled more broadly.

The intervention program, which was developed in consultation with designers and developers utilized a web-based intervention which included varied "quests" that allowed participants to engage in developing job readiness skills. Participants worked on resume development, interview skills, and digital literacy, including the use of key professional tools like Microsoft Office or simple project management software. Participants earned experience points (XP), unlocked achievements, and engaged with virtual mentors, which reinforced their motivation and experience through the gaming structure. The overall narrative of the game focused on personal growth and a growth mindset, encouraging users to embrace challenges as opportunities. Usability testing showed that participants were very engaged, had fun using the intervention, although some voiced concern that some gaming components were too complicated and detracted from the primary intent of the intervention.

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The curriculum of the intervention wove together relevant principles of positive psychology, specifically resilience and goal-setting, with practical skills thought to be important in the job market. While there was a lot of focus on technical skills and abilities, the participants were also taught soft skills, for example, communication, flexibility, and problem-solving skills, through engaging in simulations of different workplace situations.

The thematic analysis from the study revealed features of the gamified intervention helped in several areas; to reduce the anxiety of searching for a job, the gamified component helped to keep participants engaged through progress tracking over time, and finally motivated participants to have confidence in completing the tasks set out through redeemable items and milestone completion.

Despite feedback being overwhelmingly positive, it was noted that there needs to be greater care taken to ensure that the design of the game aligns with the outcomes of the intervention to avoid losing educational benefit. Overall, considering the pilot phase of the program, the results showed positive indicators that participants were more motivated and would feel more ready for employment.

This gaming-based intervention illustrates the potential ability of gamifying employment interventions to impact youth who are unemployed. By providing an immersive, user-centred experience, the program was able not only to engage youth in the process of finding employment, but to increase participants' ability to engage with and navigate the job market with increased confidence.

To offer social impact through the Blended Framework the study calls for a systematic design process to balance between entertainment and education outcomes, which can aid future digital interventions for marginalized and vulnerable populations.

6.3. BEST PRACTICES

Gamified learning has started to make an impact on adult learner engagement, especially with disconnected adult learners, allowing for skill development to feel rewarding and less threatening. Studies have shown that the S4EG Erasmus+ project and the VitaNova game-based intervention were effective in cultivating soft skills, building resilience, and enhancing future employability. There is evidence supporting that well-designed gamification can improve motivation and equip learners with the skills needed for the labor market.

Educators and program designers developing gamified learning programs should adhere to these best practices:

- **Task-based game elements:** When designing game activities incorporate 'real world' skills such as CV writing, digital literacy, interview preparation, these tasks align with employability.
- **Simplify and improve accessibility:** Create user-friendly, intuitive interfaces that are inclusive and simple to use for students with different levels of digital proficiency.
- **Provide distinct learning experiences:** Provide challenges for learners to complete at their own pace, along with other challenges for them to complete, to ensure learners engage with those ideas sufficiently to ensure learning is changed.
- **Build community and support:** Incorporate peer collaboration or friendly competition, mentoring, or career coaching can also reduce a sense of isolation and help them stay motivated.
- **Recognize progress in a meaningful way:** Make sure something is given for achievements in the form of badges, and certificates or job opportunities. This helps reinforce the meaning of the learners' contribution.
- **Blend both digital and human elements:** Consider making the gamified digital platform a framework that is enhanced with human support, group sessions or opportunities for feedback to enrich the experience.
- **Take data and iterate:** Use data collected from learners and their performance data to improve and implement changes iteratively. This helps to keep the program evolving.

By taking these perspectives into account, gamified learning programs can create engaging, challenging, enriching, and ultimately, effective learning spaces and experiences for adult learners to achieve personal and professional purpose amid their busy schedules.

7. RECOMMENDED DIGITAL TOOLS & PLATFORMS:

EDUCATOR TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

7.1. OVERVIEW OF PLATFORMS, USEFUL ADDITIONAL TOOLS WITH EXAMPLES

Classcraft

Classcraft began as an online gamification platform to facilitate student engagement in an educational setting. However, it has easily been adapted to work in adult learning contexts, such as workforce training and soft skills development.

The site, which creates educational experiences as immersive role-playing adventures, allows learners to experience education as “heroes” completing educational-themed “quests.” It creates opportunities for unemployed adults to learn and develop skills and confidence in a structure that is considered supportive and collaborative.

Classcraft also allows trainers to construct narrative-based learning modules, called “Quests.” Each “quest” includes tasks (completing assignments, watching instructional content, participating in discussions, etc.) that move a compelling storyline throughout the module. This process allows the learner to pursue engaging, purposeful learning and development, especially for adults who are older and may be intimidated or unable to pursue traditional learning experiences.

Classcraft places participants into groups which support teamwork and collaboration, as many adults may not be engaged and motivated to learn independently. This may also lead to peer support and accountability in terms of task completion. Additionally, Classcraft allows tracking of behavior, such as participation, timeliness, and positive interaction, which ultimately are critical behaviors for developing soft skills (e.g. communication, reliability, empathy, etc.) that are inherently valued in the professional context.

Classcraft's visual progress tracking, clearly defined reward systems, and team mechanics work especially well for unemployed adults. Adult learners value the ability to see actual progress as they complete quests and earn rewards for their contributions. And, because these barriers are often related to previous educational difficulties, utilizing achievements in a collaborative and welcoming environment can enhance persistence and motivation for learners.

Classcraft's gamified learning process, combined with real-world skill-building, empowers adult learners to increase their employability and better transition into the workforce.

Kahoot

Kahoot! is an exciting, game-based learning platform that changes the way training and education are delivered into a highly interactive, quick, and entertaining experience. Kahoot! is used extensively in schools, corporate training, and adult education, allowing teachers and trainers to create quizzes, surveys, and challenges to motivate learners.

Kahoot! is especially suited for unemployed adults, increasing their employment readiness, developing digital skills, and learning a new language or new skills. Kahoot! provides impact and interest in a fun and engaging way by making skill development and training inclusive and accessible.

Kahoot! can also be used for real-time or independent learning. Trainers may assign a quiz while they are presenting a session, and learners will respond to the quiz on their smartphones or computers in real time and experience the competition. While a live quiz is direct and immediate, Kahoot! can be used for asynchronous quizzes, allowing learners to move through the quiz at their own pace, which is beneficial for remote training or for their own flexible training schedule.

It can be entertaining and exciting, featuring paper scoring, timer limits, points scored, and leaderboard players, gamifying the learning, and proving highly attractive to engage adults who may already feel barriers to learning and making the engagement available to them.

For unemployed adults, Kahoot! has a unique way to instill self-confidence and participation in activities related to skill-building by leveraging friendly competition and instant feedback.

Kahoot!'s flexibility is ideal for a wide variety of training goals, such as learning to use Microsoft Office, enhancing language skills, or preparing for a job interview. By making learning fun and rewarding, it addresses the needs of unemployed adults in particular, allowing them the opportunity to learn important skills and move on to a job in the workforce, feeling more motivated and capable.

7.2. TIPS AND GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATORS ON THE TOOLS IMPLEMENTATION

Gamified platforms, such as Classcraft and Kahoot!, can be a very useful technology to **create engagement and skill acquisition** in adults in job readiness programs, especially unemployed adults. By thoughtfully gamifying the learning experience, educators will be able to meet learners' needs, increase their discourse, and produce relevant, real-world outcomes.

The following best practices, which are aimed at workforce development, will ensure that gamification is designed and implemented purposefully, is relevant, and is effective.

Educators should **start by knowing their learners' demographics, goals, and obstacles**. In the case of unemployed adults, these typically include different age groups, different levels of education and digital literacy, expectations of getting a job, and the many obstacles of not being very motivated, anxious, and not having had structured learning.

Educators should **establish clear learning objectives** for the program, including what practical skills they want them to develop, such as creating a professional resume, practicing interview skills, and more generic soft skills such as collaborating with others, oral communication and time management. All gamified elements, such as quests, XP's and leaderboards, should link to the objectives, which will help reinforce real-world competencies. Creating a gamified experience that works for adult learners requires **personalization**.

Educators should take into account age, avatar choices, language, and narratives so that activities are relatable to the learner. If learners cannot see themselves in the scenarios being played on the gamified platform, whatever gamification, activity, game-based learning, or play there is will be meaningless. For instance, Classcraft quests could include orientation-like situations where learners have to work as a team to complete a workplace project or collaboratively troubleshoot a customer service situation. Likewise, they could do a Kahoot! quiz that assesses their knowledge about job search websites or CV builders. The more the activity is **based on real-world tasks** that the learners will be executing very shortly, the more engaging and meaningful the activity is. Even job applications or skills assessments can be designed to make them feel real and relevant to the learner. Provided they are sufficiently thought through, Classcraft and Kahoot! can be enjoyable and purposeful ways for learners to learn and confidently apply their skills for employability.

When implementing any new technology, including gamification, **a defined methodology is fundamental.** To start, educators should adopt a gradual approach, introducing one tool at a time and assessing how learners interact with each tool, since it is acknowledged that not all students have the same level of digital literacy. Refresher training through basic training that is preferably offered online is beneficial practice, as well as setting out clear instructions to follow in how to access and move around the platform. Continuous support, virtual or face-to-face, will usually provide learners with the opportunity to successfully complete gamification tasks individually, in parallel, and/or in groups.

Offline or team challenges on Classcraft, or competitive quizzes in Kahoot! can **promote a sense of community** with other learners while also **reducing isolation.** Therefore, adding socialisation aspects to the learning activities is commensurate with engaging and connecting the learners. Educators can further sustain learners' motivation by acknowledging their achievements instantly through some digital badges, printable certificates, or even pretend job interviews. Using digital tools and providing real human support, like career coaching or group forum facilitation, contributes to a more supportive and positive learning atmosphere. Aiding unemployed adults in keeping motivation in their learning activities helps them attain small to big career goals.

8. TEACHING STRATEGIES ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

Adult educators can use gamification e-toolkits, including tools such as MOODLE, Kahoot!, Classcraft, TalentLMS, and resources from websites recommended in the modules, to **tailor their teaching methods** to meet the cognitive, emotional, and technological needs of unemployed adults. Instructional strategies should be carefully designed to accommodate learners' characteristics, such as diverse educational backgrounds, emotional instability, and technological limitations, to help them develop skills and re-enter the labor market. Below is a detailed analysis of the strategies we recommend and the rationale for choosing them.

To meet cognitive needs, educators can **apply strategies to personalize learning content** through digital toolkits/websites such as TalentLMS and Canvas. They can design gamified courses with real-life scenarios, such as customer service simulations, to develop critical thinking and career skills. Teachers can also use Quizizz to deliver interactive tests of digital skills, with instant feedback to help students consolidate their learning. This approach can help unemployed adults with a wide range of cognitive abilities, from those lacking basic skills to those needing to upgrade their expertise.

Personalization allows content to be tailored to their abilities, ensuring relevance and effectiveness, emphasizing skills training that are relevant to job requirements. Teachers can also encourage active learning by **holding group discussions** after quizzes on Quizizz, promoting analytical thinking, as this approach helps students apply knowledge to real-life situations, increasing retention and application.

Regarding emotional needs, teachers can **implement strategies to create a supportive and motivating learning environment** by using software such as Classcraft to turn the classroom into a role-playing game, where students receive virtual rewards for completing tasks, such as writing professional emails. They can also award digital badges via Credly when students complete modules on MOODLE, increasing the sense of accomplishment.

Additionally, teachers can use Mentimeter as a platform to host gamified Q&A sessions, **encouraging students to share their feelings and build connections**. This strategy was suggested as unemployed adults often face discouragement and loss of confidence due to job search failures.

Gamification elements stimulate intrinsic motivation, while the supportive environment reduces anxiety and fosters resilience. Teachers should also incorporate collaborative activities on Blackboard and use ClassDojo to celebrate achievements, create a sense of community, and help students feel included in their learning journey.

For technology needs, teachers can **adopt a gradual strategy in developing digital skills** by starting with user-friendly tools like Kahoot!, which provides simple tests to familiarize students with technology. Teachers can integrate gamified lessons on digital skills, such as creating a LinkedIn profile on Nearpod with step-by-step instructions to build confidence. As students progress, teachers can move to more complex platforms like Blackboard.

To address access issues, teachers can introduce students to MOODLE at a library or community center, while providing video tutorials on Canvas to support their use of the tool. This is a good solution as many unemployed adults lack devices, internet, or digital skills. Gradual progression ensures students are not overwhelmed, while access to support and visual guidance help overcome technology barriers, increasing engagement and learning.

Adult educators can utilize the e-toolkit to **implement instructional strategies** like personalizing content on TalentLMS and Canvas, creating supportive environments through Classcraft and Credly, and developing progressive digital skills with Kahoot! and Nearpod.

These strategies were recommended as they accurately address the needs of unemployed adults, from diverse cognitive levels, emotional instability, to technological limitations, helping learners develop skills, confidence, and readiness to re-enter the labor market as well as ensuring teachers optimize the learning experience.

9. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

- **Use games and puzzles** to make interview practice fun and useful. They help them think better and faster.
- **Take online courses** on websites like *edX*, *Coursera*, or *Khan Academy* to learn new topics and improve their skills.
- **Watch YouTube tutorials** to learn almost anything at your own pace.
- **Join free webinars** to get tips and knowledge from experts.
- **Learn a new language** to grow their communication skills and open new job opportunities.
- **Volunteer** at food banks or with environmental groups. It looks good on their resume and helps the community.
- **Attend industry events** to meet professionals and learn more about their field.
- **Join online communities** to ask questions, share ideas, and stay motivated.
- **Listen to podcasts** to learn from other people's real-life experiences.
- **Try role-playing** with a friend or a group in the same situation to act out a job interview to practice answering questions in a real setting.
- **Do problem-solving activities** like solving puzzles, working on practical tasks, or thinking through tricky situations to boost your critical thinking.

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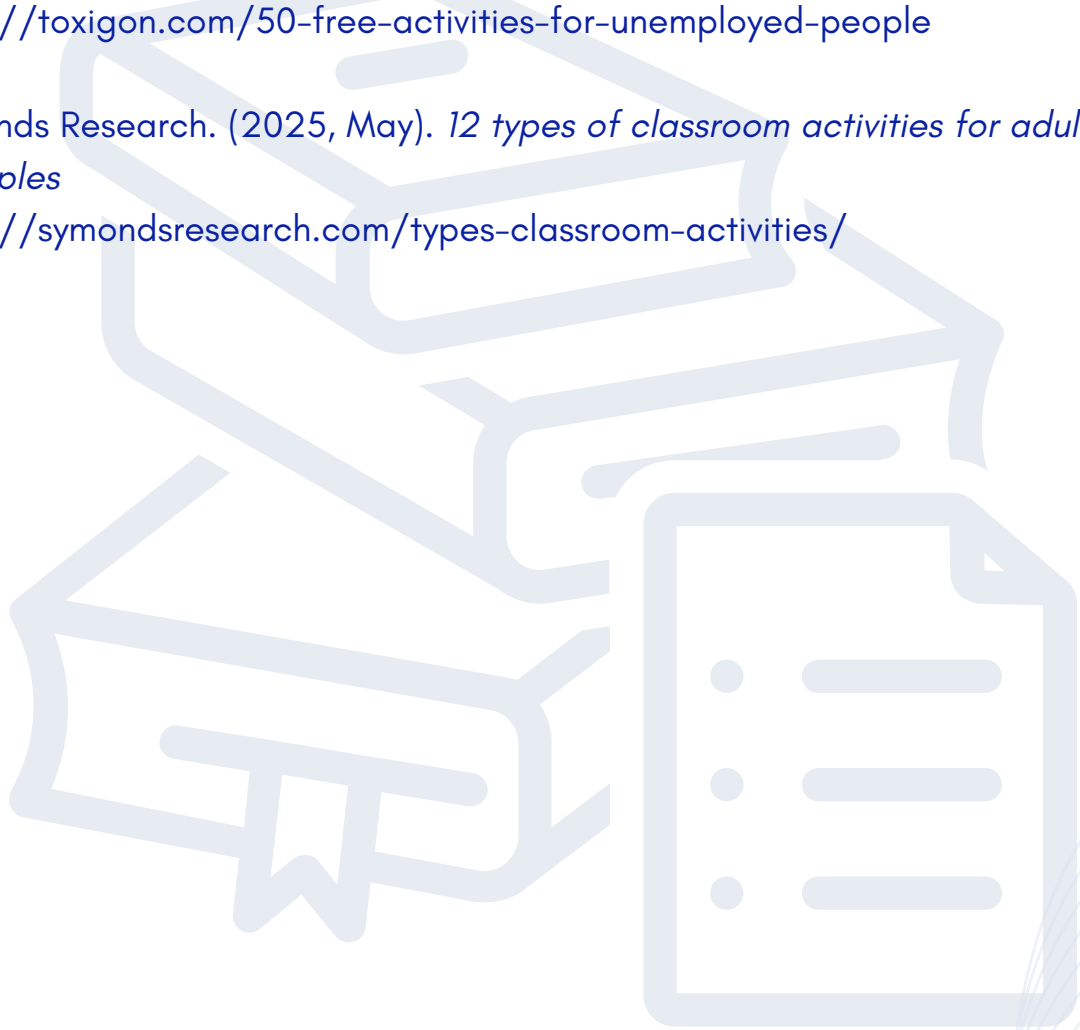
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